SACRED MISSION WORLDLY AMBITION

Black Christian Nationalism in the Age of Jim Crow

Adele Oltman

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Black Christian Nationalism in the Age of Jim Crow

ADELE OLTMAN

The University of Georgia Press | Athens and London

A Sarah Mills Hodge Fund Publication

This publication is made possible, in part, through a grant from the Hodge Foundation in memory of its founder, Sarah Mills Hodge, who devoted her life to the relief and education of African Americans in Savannah, Georgia.

© 2008 by the University of Georgia Press
Athens, Georgia 30602
All rights reserved
Set in 10.5/13.5 Adobe Caslon by Bookcomp
Printed and bound by Thomson-Shore
The paper in this book meets the guidelines for
permanence and durability of the Committee on
Production Guidelines for Book Longevity of the
Council on Library Resources.
Printed in the United States of America
12 11 10 09 08 C 5 4 3 2 1
Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
Oltman, Adele, date
Sacred mission, worldly ambition : Black Christian nationalism in the age of Jim Crow / Adele Oltman.
p. cm.
Includes bibliographical references and index.
"A Sarah Mills Hodge Fund Publication."
ISBN-13: 978-0-8203-3036-5 (hardcover : alk. paper)
ISBN-10: 0-8203-3036-1 (hardcover : alk. paper)
1. African Americans—Religion. 2. Black nationalism—United States. 3. Black power—United States. 4. Savannah (Ga.)—Church history. I. Title.
BR563.N4 O48 2008
277.58'08208996073—dc22
2007026614
British Library Cataloging-in-Publication Data available
ISBN for this digital edition: 978-0-8203-3661-9

To black Savannahians, especially Baptists,
who with courage and dignity
struggled hard to make this world a better place.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

My first debt of gratitude goes to Mr. W. W. Law, the first Savannahian I met while on an exploratory mission in search of a location within which to explore the many questions and ideas I had about religion and politics in the American South. Mr. Law convinced me to locate my study in Savannah. A veteran of manifold civil rights struggles, an activist to the end of his life—and the finest example of an autodidact—Mr. Law always had time to talk to me about his city's history and about black Savannahians' struggles for freedom. Not only do I miss him as a mentor and a friend: I regret that he did not live long enough to read this book. I am grateful to Mrs. Eloria Gilbert, widow of Ralph Mark Gilbert, who along with her husband helped ignite Savannah's civil rights movement. Mrs. Gilbert graciously shared with me her private papers and her recollections of her life in Savannah. I also thank Johnnie Mae Harris, Mr. Lucius Stevens, and Bobby Lockett, all from Saint John Baptist Church, and Father Charles L. Hoskins of Saint Matthews Episcopal Church for sharing his research and insights with me.

No expression of appreciation for the various contributions to this effort would be complete without special thanks to Pastor Matthew Southhall Brown from Saint John Baptist Church who not only opened his church's records to me; he welcomed me—the proverbial outsider—into Saint John's fellowship. Between meeting Pastor Brown for the first time and relocating to Savannah to commence research for my doctoral dissertation, I received a newspaper clipping (courtesy of Mr. Law) that told the tragic story of a fire that had burned Saint John to the ground. A month or so later, I arrived in Savannah and went directly to the former site of the church on Hartridge Street, on the city's east side. It was a cool midday in the middle of a typically mild Deep South winter. Standing in the parking lot across the narrow street were several church deacons—who had been keeping vigil virtually every day during their lunch hour. Even though the flames had long been extinguished, it seemed like smoke was still rising from the rubble. The deacons directed me to the church's temporary offices on Abercorn Street. There I found Pastor Brown in a small one-story office complex that was further diminished by the pastor's towering physique. Pastor Brown took me into a small room and from a shelf haphazardly stacked with boxes and prayer books and loose papers he removed a water-stained shoebox. He opened it and pulled out a piece of paper on which was typed a sermon written by his predecessor, Rev. E. O. S. Cleveland. With a characteristically deadpan face, Pastor Brown

asked, "Do you think this would help?" Prepared for the worst, I was flabbergasted to discover boxes of records including church membership and tithing books, B.Y.P.U. books, pastors' notes, sermons, and anniversary booklets. With the exception of minor water damage, Saint John's records had survived the leveling of the church. Gazing at me steadily over his wire-rimmed glasses, Pastor Brown said in his measured and deliberative southern preacher voice, "Sister Adele, this means your project is providential."

In a more worldly way, I am obliged to my former teachers at Columbia University including Eric Foner, who graciously read every draft and provided munificent commentary, Betsy Blackmar for her friendship and good advice, Daryl Michael Scott, and especially Barbara J. Fields for teaching me a long time ago how to read history and think about it, and for setting a standard for how to write about the people who make history. The Louisville Institute for the Study of Protestantism and American Culture provided a year of support for writing the dissertation. For reading my manuscript-in-progress and generously offering criticism, I thank Julia Rabig, who always made time to read chapters and offer suggestions for ways to improve them. For additional comments, citations, and other contributions, I thank Reginald Hildebrand, Bobby Donaldson, Adolph Reed, George Cavalletto, Sean Wilder, Paul Harvey, Rick Cummings, Tom Head, Abby Stillman, Doug Henwood, Cyrus Veeser, Bob Swacker, and the late Joe Wood, who continues to be missed nearly a decade after his untimely passing. Over the years Chip Berlet has entertained some of my ideas about evangelicalism and Protestant fundamentalism with requisite humor. Anat Jain from Savannah's Metropolitan Planning Commission made available historical maps of Savannah, and Roxanna Lester, managing editor of the *Savannah News Press*, opened the paper's archives to me during my year in Savannah. Pedro Benitez's unflagging optimism, humor, and comradeship during some of the more onerous stages of preparing the manuscript for publication were especially welcome. For help with a variety of technical problems, I thank Andrew Platner, Philip Weickert, Sam Aronson, Ramotse Saunders, and Sharon Guillory. I am indebted to Clement A. Price from Rutgers University in Newark for making me a Visiting Scholar and to Ann Vreeland Watkins, from Rutgers-Newark's John Cotton Dana Library. I thank Bob Scott, reference librarian par excellence at Columbia University, David Moore from Columbia's ILL, and Wilson Alejo and Bridget McCarthy, who made long shifts in Columbia's microfilm reading room productive. I am indebted to the staff of Asa Gordon Library at Savannah State College, especially Dr. Guy Craft, Joia Ellis-Dinkins, and Shamima Amin. I thank the staff of the main branch of the Savannah Public Library, Wilson Flemister at the Atlanta

University Center of the Woodruff Library, and Kenneth W. Rose from the Rockefeller Archives. And finally, I thank Andrew Berzanskis of the University of Georgia Press for recognizing this book's distinctive potential to the field of southern history.

I nearly did not live to complete this book. I was not quite halfway through revising the manuscript for publication when on a cold January evening during rush hour a New York City fire truck whipped around a corner and struck me down as I was crossing a street in my neighborhood in upper Manhattan. I woke up a week later in a poorly funded and understaffed city hospital; and my first months of medical treatment corresponded to the accordingly vague and uncertain prognosis. For as long as I can remember I have been most comfortable living inside words and ideas; but during that bleak Winter—which for me lasted approximately until the Summer Solstice—while I struggled through the first phase of recovery I often wondered about my destiny. Would I be selling oranges on the streets of New York City—or worse? Would I return to my world of thinking and writing? This book became my lifeline as I worked hard to regain some semblance of my former self and return to that place I have always called home. To that end, I am deeply grateful to Joseph Turkel for helping me find the courage to return to this manuscript and to Edward Kenney for his willingness to approach the complexity of healing from "outside the box." If it were not for both doctors' steady consistency in helping me traverse the indiscriminate and unpredictable terrain of traumatic injury, this book might have remained little more than a good idea. My friend Sean Wilder, with extraordinary patience and an unfamiliar magnitude of kindness, got me writing again with e-mails from Montpellier, France. To his first message I responded, tentatively. Sean answered my uncertain foray into the world of thinking and writing with words of his own. Very soon I was writing paragraphs, and not long after that I found myself exploring ideas. Approximately a year after the accident I was able to return to the manuscript and hone it into the book that it has become. Mustapha Konté, with extraordinary fortitude and nearly unfathomable devotion, not only encouraged me to keep my eye on the twin prize of completion and recovery: he patiently listened to my copious speculations and suppositions as I reflected on the various expressions of nationalism that have been intrinsic to modern history.

If all books are products of social interaction, mine is that and more. Intellectual dialogue mingled with medical and therapeutic trial and error, and while I have expressed deep appreciation for everyone who pitched in, I take full responsibility for the book, shortcomings and virtues alike.

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INTRODUCTION

Sixty years after Abraham Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation, black Savannahians gathered together for a public remembrance. The first spectators began marking their places along West Broad Street in the heart of the city's black business district some three hours before the parade was to begin. The skies were overcast that morning but did not discourage black Savannahians, who congregated at a steady pace until there were so many cramming the sidewalks that they might not have even noticed the cooler than usual temperatures. As half past ten drew near they jostled among themselves, each trying to secure a position from which to catch a glimpse of their fellow Savannahians marching by. The sizable turnout reflected the buoyant effervescence of black political activity that followed the ratification of the Woman's Suffrage Amendment to the United States Constitution. After nearly two decades of de jure disfranchisement in Georgia, 1923 marked the third year of a partially successful black foray into political affairs in Savannah. According to the *Savannah Tribune*, the city's black weekly, this was "one of the most spectacular demonstrations seen in this city for many a day."[1]

The parade wound its way through the "principle streets of the city," past the now stately squares that recalled the genesis of James Oglethorpe's Savannah as a military outpost defending against Indian and Spanish adversaries. It coursed past the splendid handsome homes on the avenues and streets where the white aristocratic gentility resided, and behind which stood the far more modest simple-framed cottages, a story and a half high, the steeply pitched gable roofs lining the narrow alleyways—where members of Savannah's black working classes had settled. Black and white and poor and rich continued to dwell in close proximity, a reminder of the not too distant era of slavery when the slaveholding elite kept their chattel nearby and behind them in order to supervise them in work and play. This built environment, a pervasive metaphor for the status of descendants of the enslaved and the free, was passed down for generations, through slavery and its end, during the interregnum years, and finally the rise of Jim Crow. On that New Year morning, the remarkably solemn parade marking the storied decree that ended slavery suspended the ideological regime, if only for a few hours, as black Savannahians streamed en masse through the wide avenues and the streets *in front of* the mansions and houses that conveyed affluence and influence.

First came the beating of the drums. Necks craned to glimpse the source, and before long Middleton's Band, turning left on West Broad from Gwin-

nett, appeared in the distance. Donning his colonel's cap, Nathan Roberts, a deacon at First Bryan Baptist Church and a prominent business and civic leader, led the First Georgia Regiment Knights of Pythias. Next came five more companies of the Knights, followed by the Weldon Lodge of Elks, the Savannah Home Association, and the Georgia Elks. Sol Johnson, the outspoken publisher and editor of the *Savannah Tribune*, and a member of the elite First Congregational Church, led the Knights of Damon. The World War veterans, the Union Brotherhood Benevolent Association, the Young Adelphia Aid and Social Club, and the Evening Aid and Call Social Club followed in formation.[2]

Women were not absent from the parade. The Federation of Colored Women's Clubs, which by 1923 had become affiliated with the Georgia State Federation of Colored Women's Clubs and the National Association of Colored Women, marched in front of the "ladies and children of the free clinic" and various drill corps, which the *Tribune* did not see fit to enumerate. This all but cursory mention of women's participation as compared to the full listing of men's groups reflected not women's limited involvement in civic or sacred life but a striking paradox in the arrangement of the sexes: marginalized from leadership in their faith communities, which until then was what mattered most in black public life, and longing for men to assume their God-given mantle of protection and provision, black women were at the forefront of a remarkable struggle for black inclusion in the body politic.

Although many elements of black Savannah were represented in the parade, no one group was more prominent than the clergy. Like kings on their way to a coronation, members of the Interdenominational Ministers Union and the Baptist Ministers Union sat in horse-drawn carriages, high above all others, symbolizing their continuing sovereignty in both sacred and secular leadership, and the institutional primacy of their churches in their communities. When black southerners stood poised at the brink of freedom in the last days of the Civil War, their churches were their strongest independent institutions, and for well over the next half century, black political and economic civic leadership emerged directly from the pulpit.

When this Emancipation Day parade took place, citizenship had been racialized constitutionally in Georgia for more than a decade, and white supremacy was celebrated in virtually every corner of white southern life. The Ku Klux Klan, revitalized in 1915 in Savannah and elsewhere, was so well regarded in white civil society that the Grand Master of the local Klan was frequently quoted as a respectable leading citizen in Savannah's white daily. Throughout the 1920s Klan members regularly paraded through the center of town in broad daylight, in full dress regalia, including hooded robes and

carrying burning crosses. These temperate KKK performances proved efficient means of spreading terror among black southerners. Ultimately, the Klan and other groups like it offered white southerners a new language of sexualized politics that represented an elaborate shift from the white-only democratic and republican discourse that had justified the coexistence of black slavery and white liberty in the antebellum South to ominous warnings about the political and sexual perils of racial equality during the Progressive Era.

This study begins with an exploration of the public dimension of black religion in the early twentieth century. Although the churches were still the dominant social and political institutions in the black South, middle-class and elite African Americans had made great strides in diversifying their communities. By 1920 Savannah had become a vibrant center of black business, setting an example for urban black communities everywhere. Black Savannahians had built banks, life insurance and real estate companies, a department store, and a pharmacy with three branches located throughout the city in predominantly black neighborhoods. Theirs was an energetic and creative expression of the possibility for community advancement that flowed directly from the close relationship between black Christianity and black business. A mapping of black Savannah's churches and financial and business institutions reveals a profound connection between the temporal and the spiritual in everyday life. Lay and ordained church leadership sat on the boards of directors of the banks and largest business establishments. This intersection between the sacred and secular produced an ethos that I refer to in this book as Black Christian Nationalism. Black leaders understood their work quite literally as Kingdom building, and in their world everyone was someone and received into God's commonwealth with open arms. This was an interclass prophecy that informed their understanding of "Negro uplift," which was not so much an exclusionary tactic as one of persuasion. The black professionals who were beginning to dot the urban landscape were no more equal than the masses of day laborers, porters, dredgers, fertilizer factory workers, laundresses, and domestic servants.

The name of the leading black bank, the Wage Earners Savings Bank, conveys this point. Middle-class black Savannahians believed they shared a common destiny with members of the working classes, with the uneducated, and with new arrivals from the countryside. The establishments that made up Savannah's black business community resembled more the mutual benefit societies that first appeared in the antebellum era than modern financial institutions. They were organized not only to provide services but also to morally elevate black Savannah from the spiritual degradations that accompanied financial hardship and poverty. These business establishments were

tangible expressions of community, and they formed a basis from which black Christian Savannahians tacitly critiqued the emerging spirit of consumerism that was blanketing much of white middle- and upper-class America. Black Americans shared little in the materialistic pleasures (and compulsive addiction) of buying that white America celebrated. As late as 1940, a majority of black Savannahians lived in dwellings that lacked private baths, electricity, gas stoves, modern refrigerators, and other consumer goods. Many continued to cook on wood stoves and use outhouses for lack of flush toilets.[3] The 1920s "era of prosperity," characterized by the production and distribution of household commodities purchased on the "never-never," had not yet reached the black South.

Excluded from prosperity and segregated from social and civic life more generally, black southern Christians became inwardly focused, looking toward their own communal resources for survival. They did not live their lives simply in reaction to white oppression. Nor had they ever. The historian Steven Hahn compels us to recognize that the mobilization for black freedom that rapidly took hold in every corner of the South owed directly to the political practices that slaves shaped and carried with them into freedom.[4] In his study of the "world the slaves made," Eugene Genovese identifies black Christianity in the slave quarters "as the roots of an embryonic national religion in the consciousness of the slave class."[5] If with freedom the former slaves had miraculously become citizens with suffrage and social and economic opportunities, those roots might not have germinated. The Black Christian Nationalism that appeared in the post-Reconstruction period and continued into the years leading up to World War II implies some measure of continuity with black southerners' histories and experiences incorporating various degrees of freedom and unfreedom.

Black Christian Nationalism also came with some startling contradictions. Although it signified a fellowship that set black Christians apart from white Christians by creating a distinctive sensibility and theology, it was geared toward inclusion and acceptance by mainstream America and especially membership in that guild of American democracy. Nowhere is this contradiction illustrated more clearly than in the late nineteenth century when the rising black middle class in Georgia, many of them Baptist and all of them nationalists, came into conflict among themselves over whether they should continue to work with religious and secular philanthropists from the North in the area of education. A nascent black Baptist separatist movement emerged after educated black Baptists suffered a series of humiliating degradations; and they set about to organize their own black denominational school outside Macon called Central City College. The black nationalists of this era were cultural assimilationists and integrationists at heart.

Like all nationalisms, Black Christian Nationalism was arranged as a bridge between elites and masses, and it required some convergence of forces and efforts from above and below. Black Christian Nationalism stood for an inter-class, corporate aspiration for advancement, and while its eloquent spokesmen and women saw themselves as a universal class representing the interests of all black Savannahians, they were, in fact, a relatively elite group. They were the stepchildren of the national elite, the "aristocrats of color" that the historian Willard Gatewood writes about.[6] In Savannah they comprised a small but influential black professional class and a slightly larger cohort of men and a few women who provided nonprofessional services to black Savannah. They were the movers and shakers of black institutional life, serving as lay and ordained leaders in the mainline churches and in the black Baptist local, state, and national organizations. Most had attended high school, and more than a few were college graduates. They were members of black fraternal orders, the Savannah branches of the National Negro Business League and the Federation of Colored Women's Clubs. They were public and private school teachers, and clerks and secretaries in black-owned institutions, and they owned and operated a weekly newspaper. But unlike the constructed nationalist ideology espoused by Marcus Garvey during the same period, or the black nationalism that emerged in the 1960s era, Black Christian Nationalism grew out of a spiritual space that although not territorial, was far from ethereal: it combined narrative constructions of collective identity with a materialist foundation and a Christian worldview. This nationalism, rather than the ambition to control the apparatus of state power, was a cultural elaboration, and so much more. It was metaphorical and metaphysical, but with practical implications, in which the temporal and the spiritual became intertwined. It was not merely a psychological phenomenon or a desire to belong, but a concrete strategy for human survival—and resilience.

Expressions of mutual cooperation that were perceptible in economic and social life appeared in political life as well. The disfranchisement of black men, institutionalized segregation and inequality, and state-sanctioned violence against black people impelled the changing political sites and social boundaries of black Savannah. When the Woman's Suffrage Amendment to the United States Constitution was ratified in 1920, these boundaries shifted in paradoxical ways. In Savannah, as in some other southern cities, black women seized the opportunity and voted in municipal elections until they were squeezed out of the process with threats of physical violence. In Savannah they had full support of their men, a tangible example of the corporatist ethos that flowed from Black Christian Nationalism. Men's support of women voting illustrates some of the contradictions inherent in this nationalism that would eventually contribute to its demise. Although a sizeable

majority of Savannah's "Female Talented Tenth" hailed from one of the three largest and most elite black Baptist churches and in fact honed their organizational and leadership skills in church work, they were absent from official church leadership on the grounds that the natures of men and women were essentially different. Women were angels in their homes, gently shaping their insular dominion, the very opposite of the striving and impersonal world beyond its walls. The same women who unambiguously accepted the notion that separate spheres for men and women was the natural order struggled for the practice and principle of citizenship for all black women as a way to make black men powerful (and manly). Their ultimate goal was to see their men become re-franchised so that they could take their proper places as leaders and protectors. These women were not feminists, not by comparison with their contemporaries in northern cities, which included many of the same women who led the movement for suffrage. Historical serendipity propelled them forward, and there would be ramifications for years to come. Still, in the 1920s, there was more that was nineteenth-century traditional about them than twentieth-century modern feminist.

I began this study as a search for what religious and biblical scholars call a hermeneutic in black religion in the twentieth century. I was interested in finding connections between the conditions under which black Christians in the South were living and their hopes and dreams for their future. I believed I would find what I was looking for by analyzing black southern Christians' interpretations of biblical text. Although I expected to find the narratives of the Hebrew Bible as the centerpiece of a black theology—arguably the case during the era of slavery—I found evidence that demanded different understandings of black religion during the age of Jim Crow. By the early twentieth century, the descriptions of Moses leading the persecuted but ultimately victorious from Pharaonic Egypt were no longer the most resonant biblical passages. Galatians (3:26–28) and Acts 2 (10:34–36), texts that emphasize themes that center on the hope for the realization of the universality of salvation and the kinship of humanity under the sovereignty of God, had replaced Exodus.[7] The focus, which at one time had been on escape from bondage and a rejection of America, continued to embody a prophetic critique of racist America, but it had shifted to a desire for inclusion in America's ideals. The premise of Black Christian Nationalism was a belief in the promise of eschatological and worldly redemption and the conviction that once black Christians were delivered from psychic, spiritual, and material want, they would release *all* of America from the suffering that prevented it from achieving its noble ideals. Although southern black Americans' faith claims would not be articulated in secular political terms until after World

War II, their vision of redemption prefigured some of the beliefs and ideas that would come to animate the civil rights movement. Galatians and Acts 2 represented an ontology of equality and a powerful rejection of the racial injustice that remained firmly embedded in southern culture. The idea of the kinship of humanity under the authority of God was a leveling impulse, a spiritual rejection of the racialized—and racist—social order.

Notwithstanding their ability to recast Protestantism, black Baptists' respect for what was historically the religion of their oppressors represented considerable ambivalence. It was both critical and accommodationist. Southern black Baptists held to a faith in civilizationism, conservative in not only its rejection of non-Christian beliefs but its embrace of hierarchy; and it coexisted with the prophetic Protestantism that black Baptists had transformed into a source of psychic-spiritual power and inspiration for learning and affirmation. Significantly, they believed that access to the highest stage of human civilization was not restricted to Europeans and their descendants. Nor was Christian salvation for the chosen few. It was not pre-ordained: it was not an entitlement or contingent on a lifetime of good works. Spiritual deliverance was attainable by anyone who desired it, at any stage in an individual's earthly life. Those who rejected it were uncivilized heathens at the lowest end on the ladder of human progress: they were beyond the pale of respectability.

While black middle-class religious leaders encouraged interclass fellowship and cooperation in church rituals that extended into public life, they also worked hard to control the behavior of members of mainline churches. They deployed "strategies of distinction" that were sharply critical of certain *forms* of behavior—although, significantly, not the individuals who engaged in the behavior.[8] Much has already been written on the black middle-class Christian conviction that adherence to nineteenth-century notions of what constituted moral behavior would ultimately lead to racial advancement. Scholars writing about black leadership at the turn of the twentieth century have not yet settled on the meaning of the important themes of racial uplift and respectability. Interpretations have ranged from, at the most critically dismissive, a numbing pathology that spread like a virus through middle-class communities to subtle but effective forms of resistance.[9] I suspect this line of debate has gone as far as it can and that now is a good time to take a different approach.

The black middle class's insistence on certain forms of behavior fit in with larger social transformations that accompanied black urbanization in the South. Negro uplift, church discipline, and a dogged determination to achieve church orthodoxy represented black southerners' ventures into the realm of "modernity" where reason replaces superstition, and sharper spatial

distinctions separate the public from private in all areas of life. In many times and many places people coming together to form uniquely exclusive groups, including nationhood, have strived for group improvement that involved privileging some behaviors over others.[10] In advancing strategies of distinction, black middle-class Christians were in fact promoting forms of rationality that involved the removal from the public realm all appeals to emotion and desire that were associated with the popular classes. In his study of the exclusionary aspects of nationalism, the political scientist Anthony Marx writes that intrinsic to the constituent interclass element of nationalism are elites' efforts to "harness mass passions" that "exploded from below."[11] "Negro uplift" as advanced by black elites was a striving for a rationalized public space, and as a social development it was thus hardly exceptional to African American life. What *was* exceptional, of course, was the shape and history of the particular struggles.

For example, Savannah's mainline black Baptists were condescending and intolerant of the plethora of uneducated storefront preachers who hung out the proverbial shingle and declared themselves ministers. These "jackleg preachers," as black leaders disdainfully referred to them, attracted rural migrants because they did not preach above the heads of their uneducated congregants with the idea of educating and elevating them. As one critic sneered, their sermons and services appealed to the hearts and not the minds. Similarly, when Bishop C. M. Grace rolled into town for the first time in 1926 and held flamboyant tent services and equally spectacular outdoor mass baptisms, middle-class black Baptist leaders called on civil authorities to silence him. When that failed, they dispatched religious surveillance teams to monitor church members' comings and goings from Grace's tent. Guilty parties were summoned before their respective churches to submit to disciplinary hearings for "schismatic" transgressions. Middle-class black Baptists' harsh judgments of Grace and the storefront preachers were grounded to a large extent in their endeavor to foster a regulated public space. Similarly, black Baptists punished their cohort for all manner of transgressions, from distilling moonshine, public drunkenness, behaving in a manner "unbecoming" to a Christian, and "neglecting Christian duty," a euphemism for tithing.

Punishing women for fornication and adultery deserves close scrutiny for what it reveals about the relations between the sexes and nationalism. Men were infrequently charged with sexual misconduct. The double standard of punishment for extramarital sexual relations sheds light on specific problems faced by black women in a larger social order that was framed by a universal belief that women were guardians of morality and virtue. Punishment had the effect of symbolically desexualizing black women and making

black men appear in relationship to them as less vulnerable and frail. Politically disfranchised black men were feminized by the new sturdiness of black women that was brought on by the woman's suffrage amendment. Socially they were feminized through their relegation to low-paid subservient work. In black colleges and universities that were supported by northern philanthropists, educated black men were feminized through their exclusion from teaching and administrative positions. Psychologically black men were feminized through their inability to protect their women from white men's forced sexual advances. Conversely, black women, far from epitomizing the ideal of wife and mother—passive, delicate, and submissive—discovered an unfamiliar muscularity at the polls. Womanless weddings that involved cross-dressing male brides in reflexive cultural performances were ubiquitous in parts of the white South; they cropped up in black communities, too, including Savannah's mainline black Baptist communities of faith. They provided participants and observers with a way to ride out anxieties that appeared as a result of the sexual role reversals that cut at core beliefs. Womanless weddings were raucous affairs starring leading members of black Savannah who made audiences howl with laughter with their physical comedy antics and their partially scripted lampoonery. To laugh was to diffuse the disquieting power of the feminization of black men.

At the eve of World War II—and the modern civil rights movement—the black clergy's dominance in public life was receding. *Sacred Mission, Worldly Ambition* tells the story of the decline of Black Christian Nationalism and its broader social and political meaning. It shows how the sacred became disentangled from the temporal, allowing for the surfacing of a public secularity, long associated with modernity. These were complicated developments that corresponded with larger economic and social changes. The rationalization of public space, redefinitions of public and private, and the gradual divergence between sacred and secular life can be traced from the end of slavery and through the rise of capitalist social relations in the countryside and the southern city and the advent of modernity.[12]

The early diversification of black public space that began after slavery and increased momentum at the turn of the twentieth century did not take place as a smooth journey in time and space. It occurred with many bumps and a degree of unevenness, typical of broad social change. Even before the onset of the Great Depression, Savannah's black banks were failing, signaling the beginning of the decline of Black Christian Nationalism. The failure of Savannah's financial institutions blurred the lines separating the sacred from the secular, and the increasing pace of black migration from Savannah to northern cities accompanied the appearance of new secular black

organizations that were independent from black churches, representing a sharper division between the eschatological and political. Significantly, in the 1930s, black women were leaders of the local chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. With this new secularization, churches gradually became more tolerant and endeavored less to control the lives and behaviors and beliefs of their members. If nationalism links elites and the popular classes, the unraveling of Black Christian Nationalism had the opposite effect. It accompanied the appearance of classes newly stratified with attachments to new sets of exclusions. In the years leading up to World War II, we begin to see evidence of this with expressions of Christian fellowship between the mainline black churches and middle-class white churches.

Given all we know about the leadership of the modern civil rights movement, especially the faith claims and vocations of important figures like the Reverend Martin Luther King Jr. and his Southern Christian Leadership Conference, *Sacred Mission* advances a counter-intuitive argument about black churches and the modern civil rights movement. The unambiguously political civil rights movement that drew on many of the principles of Christianity and radiated from some, although not all, local black churches, unfolded the way it did not because churches were so important in black communities; rather, it was because the churches had lost their institutional primacy in those same communities. Some scholars of the civil rights movement have fallen into the trap of writing about "the black church," monolithic and never changing since the days of slavery. What they have failed to take into account is that the social conditions in the urban South had changed, propelling transformations inside the churches and their relationships with their respective communities. A predictable consequence of this lapse is an exaggerated portrait of charismatic leadership at the expense of the efforts of local men and women who charted new territory before the nationally known leaders of the movement arrived.[13]

As the corporatist, interclass, and intergendered Black Christian Nationalism receded into history, and the churches retreated from monitoring the behavior of their members outside the churches, the same churches were becoming less dominant in their communities. Black churches, which heretofore had performed like governments, began to relinquish some of their civil authority as church members and leaders began to look toward secular civil society to preserve order. Black Savannah—and the black South in general—was undergoing the same social process of secularization that all groups go through as they cross the threshold into the age of modernity. By secularization I do not mean that black churches or religion ceased to be important in

the lives of black Savannahians, or that even black Christians' faith claims lessened. By secularization I mean a separation between church and civil society, a process of laicization, where the courts move away from the churches and from enforcing biblical injunction to consider civil law that is passed by a secular legislature and judiciary. Although many local studies of the modern civil rights movement document the black churches as the principal places where organization for social change and racial justice took place, it was not until the churches became less insular and more outwardly focused that they would become settings from which to wage political struggle.[14]

This book is framed thematically. Taken together the five chapters and epilogue explore the meaning of Black Christian Nationalism and what it meant for group advancement, political struggle, the intersection of sacred and secular life, and the rise of black secularization. It shows that the decline of Black Christian Nationalism occurred alongside the rise of the modern civil rights movement. Chapter 1 is concerned with the interweaving of black sacred and secular worlds from the moment of freedom into the 1920s. It pays close attention to the ways local members of the emerging black middle classes identified progress and development as a group endeavor that included members of all classes. And it draws the sacred and secular institutional details of Black Christian Nationalism, the engine on which their communities developed.

The book explores all the denominations in Savannah, especially in regard to their public sacred life; but it delves deepest into the numerically dominant Baptist denomination in discussions of theology and internal workings of the churches. Chapter 2 shows that southern black Baptists had more in common theologically with their white co-religionists in the South than with the liberal Protestantism that was challenging the social order in northern urban areas during the Progressive Era. Black middle-class southern Baptists never completely shook off the Calvinist orthodoxy that had critically shaped their theology at its inception. While they opposed the Social Gospel Movement, they espoused a social gospel of their own that was organically grounded in their own conception of a universal progressive revelation that embodied a belief in the possibility for all—including not only white Baptists but all Americans—to achieve grace and perfection.

Chapter 3 recounts the history of black male disfranchisement in Georgia, not as a problem of racial management or race relations, but as a movement to delimit democracy and potential political challenges to the solid Democratic South, which resulted in legalized racial segregation and disfranchisement. Against this background black women in Savannah struggled to mobilize the vote after the ratification of the Woman's Suffrage Amendment to the United

States Constitution in 1920. Although they voted for only a few years—and in nonbinding municipal elections—these women were not feminists or even proto-feminists. The leaders of this movement came from the city's mainline black Baptist churches, and while the churches themselves remained on the sidelines, black men (who were by then disfranchised themselves) did not, illustrating the corporatist ethos that flowed from Black Christian Nationalism.

Rejecting standard binary divisions between politically radical and militant separatists, on the one hand, and moderate accommodationists on the other, chapter 4 examines the meanings of black nationalism at the turn of the twentieth century. It considers the political struggles involving two groups of black Baptists in the state of Georgia and white northern philanthropists, and it describes the black Baptist separatists' struggle to establish and support an independent black denominational school. Both groups of black Baptists—those who supported continuing cooperation with the philanthropists and those who wanted to proceed on their own—were Black Christian Nationalists with similar goals.

With the decline of the institutional primacy of the black churches in their communities, the character of the clergy and the lay leadership changed, and as chapter 5 shows, those changes did not occur easily or without wrenching struggle, sometimes involving the (white) civil courts. The social, political, and even literal emasculation of black southern men—and the few years of black women's suffrage in the early 1920s while black men were still disfranchised—had social consequences for gender relations that the faith communities attempted to redress. Womenless weddings, detailed here along with church discipline and punishment, became mechanisms to diffuse the power of the feminization of black men. They also promoted corporatism even as they delineated differences between the sexes. With the collapse of the material underpinning of Black Christian Nationalism in the early years of the Great Depression, which was followed by black migration to the North, the preeminence of the churches in their communities and the city-at-large diminished. The strategies of distinction that accompanied the rise of the black middle classes and their articulations of Negro uplift shifted to new strategies of exclusion that were based on a range of criteria including sharper articulations of divisions between the classes. The idea of the "beloved community" that many veterans of the civil rights movement recall was more a prophetic ideal than an allusion to a corporatist past.

The epilogue sets the stage for the rise of the postwar modern civil rights movement as a movement for citizenship. Many of the leaders of this movement came from the churches, which were now transformed from conser-

vative, inward-looking bootstrap operations to institutions that took on the strictures and structures of inequality and white supremacy. The institutional sovereignty of the churches was challenged by secular organizations including the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and a few local organizations. Leadership, which included men and women, came from inside and outside the churches.

Social history requires local sources, and before I began my research I encountered an overwhelming consensus among church scholars in the North that records of black churches were unlikely to have survived; and if they had, outsiders would never be given access. While wandering around the South doing a bit of reconnaissance for my study, I found myself in Savannah. The first person I met was a veteran of the civil rights movement, Mr. W. W. Law, who directed me to the First African Baptist Church. There I found scores of material waiting for my inspection. I chose Savannah quite simply because it was there that I first found sources and a willingness of local residents to help me in my endeavor to find more. When I returned to commence my research six months later, I found a few other churches that had preserved their proceedings and minutes of church and deacons' meetings, membership rolls, pastors' notes, anniversary booklets, church constitutions, and so forth, and they were willing to let me study these materials. There were also church members who welcomed me into their homes to scrutinize church materials that had in some cases been in their families for several generations and had never before been studied.

Aside from this anecdote of chance, Savannah turned out to be a good choice for a local, monographic study that illuminates complicated themes for several reasons. Most historical studies of black religion have relied on national and state institutional records and private and published writings of national elites. Black Savannah was sufficiently isolated from the national mainstream but developed institutionally and culturally to have produced its own group of local elites, some of whom were connected to national organizations; and there were many more whose stories were embedded in Savannah. Savannah was a good place to begin this study because it was a vibrant center of black entrepreneurial activity. It is also the home of the earliest black Baptist churches, organized in the eighteenth century. By the end of slavery these churches had produced spirited—and spiritual—black leadership, and by the beginning of the twentieth century the city boasted an energetic and varied Christian culture. I raise some of the same questions that other scholars have addressed, but by placing this study nearer to the ground, I come to a different understanding of some of the larger intellectual questions, including the meaning of Negro uplift, southern black theology after

slavery, gender and black women's political activities in the South, southern black relations with northern white philanthropists—especially in education matters—and different expressions of nationalism. More than anything else, it was the lacerating horrors of American racism that forced all black southerners to glimpse the possibility of nation instead of class.

CHAPTER 1

MAPPING BLACK SAVANNAH

Nation and Religion

A visitor to Savannah in 1920 walking south on West Broad Street, several blocks from the "official" commercial district, would encounter the hustle and bustle of black business and cultural life. Within a three-block radius stood three black-owned banks—a fourth would open its doors in 1921. The heart of the black business district was at the corner of Alice and West Broad, where the Wage Earners Savings Bank stood, like a proud fortress giving lie to all the negative stereotypes white people had devised about the descendants of black slaves. In 1922, *The Crisis* magazine of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People characterized the Wage Earners as the largest black-owned bank in the country. The Railroad Men's International Office was located in the Wage Earners Building, as were the home offices of the Chatham Mutual Life and Insurance Company and the Savannah branch office of the Pilgrim Health and Life Insurance Company. The bank, for which one of the city's two "colored buildings" was named, stood next to the office of the Savannah branch of the Atlanta Mutual Insurance Company. One block south stood the Savannah Savings and Real Estate Corporation, in the same block as the Georgia Mutual Insurance Company and the other "colored building," the Williams Building, which

housed the local office of the Georgia Mutual Company. The Mechanics Savings Bank stood across the street in the next block, not far from Union Train Station. Attorney James G. Lemon conducted business next to the Wage Earners, in the same building as J. W. Jamerson's dental office. Many smaller black-owned businesses peppered the West Broad business district, including the Peoples' Shaving Parlor, the Southern Beauty Products Company, and the Toggery Shop. Ethel Young's beauty parlor was across the street from the Wage Earners, and several blocks down the street, near the Colored Methodist Episcopal (CME) Church, at West Broad and Maple Lane, was the Savannah Publishing Company. Nearby stood the main branch of the Savannah Pharmacy. Two entrepreneurial black doctors from Brunswick, Georgia, had established the pharmacy in 1910—most likely with money they borrowed from the Wage Earners—and fourteen years later it had expanded to three branch stores located strategically throughout the city in predominantly black neighborhoods.[1] The Liberty Lunchroom was but one of the places where the doctors and lawyers and shop owners and workers could convene to discuss business and politics over a noon meal.

Bolton Street Baptist Church shared the next block with Saint Augustine's Episcopal Church (local folklore has it that only "high yellows" attended this church), and Emmae Swangin, the proprietress of the Swangin Beauty School, lived next to Mount Zion Baptist Church. The offices of the *Savannah Tribune*, where Sol Johnson, editor of the city's black weekly, assembled the newspaper and wrote his editorials, were located across the street from Mount Zion. Scattered throughout this area stood two black-owned movie theaters, the Magnolia Cafe, and the residences of several prominent black Savannahians, including Rev. T. J. Goodall, pastor of First African Baptist, Mrs. Mamie Williams, who by then had achieved some national prominence for her work in the Club Women's movement and anti-lynching campaigns, and Dr. F. S. Belcher, a deacon at First African Baptist.[2]

By the end of World War I black Savannahians had organized three banks, four real estate firms, three "home" insurance companies (and five branch offices), and four undertaking companies, and to furnish their twenty-five store-front beauty parlors with coiffeuses, they operated two beauty schools. In 1920 black entrepreneurs organized the Southern Beauty Products Company, which carried fourteen "Gloria" products, and conducted courses in hair and beauty culture. They also owned and operated a mattress factory, some seventy grocery stores, most of which were small neighborhood operations, thirty shoe repair shops, forty cafes and restaurants, and two theaters—a third one, owned by a "white concern catering exclusively to colored trade," closed in 1921 for lack of patronage, suggesting race consciousness and black

pride among black Savannahians. Other black-owned businesses included an automobile accessory supply house, twenty bicycle repair stations, forty barbershops, and two stores that sold gentlemen's notions.[3]

At the center of all this commercial development was the social and institutional primacy of the churches—hardly surprising given their history as independent black organizations since before abolition and significant centers of black life subsequently. Since that first flush of freedom black men and women had looked toward their ministers and other churchmen to represent them in political life, and black churchmen, more prepared for leadership than anyone else, were willing to oblige. They contributed to interracial Union Leagues, ran for political office, and organized the first schools for black southerners in the country's history.[4] Years later, their progeny became New Jerusalem's urban planners: they built businesses, which were in a sense cultural extensions of the churches.

West Broad Street was more than a black commercial district. It was the heart and soul of black Savannah. It provided the life force for constituent and frequently overlapping religious, business, and professional elements of the rising black middle class. It was from this configuration that hope and prophetic optimism emerged, where kingdom building began experientially as a merging of Christianity with business precepts on which ministers regularly expounded in their sermons and that business leaders emphasized in their ad copy. The codes of self-discipline, moral restraint, thrift, and investment in black-owned business ventures formed the cornerstone of the Promised Land. Church leaders, mostly Baptist and all men, led the largest of the business concerns—the banks, insurance, and real estate companies—and the integration of Christian life into the business community resulted in the creation of a sacralized civic space—a blurring of the lines separating the sacred from the secular.

The profound relationship between the theological and ritual foundations that emanated from religion and church life and the relatively new business institutions produced the ubiquitous idea of racial uplift and an ethos of Black Christian Nationalism. Racial uplift embodied group survival and a corporatist striving for racial advancement. It issued from the social processes of urbanization and civic life that was shaped by heartless racism. Black Christian Nationalism was expressed by business and religious leaders' literal understanding of their work as creating heaven on earth. They believed that business had sacred and secular redemptive possibilities for all of black Savannah, no matter how rich or poor. The name of the city's premier black bank, the Wage Earners Savings Bank, illustrates this point. In addition to its explicit class identification, the name suggested the idea of communal

self-help rather than the individualism and acquisitiveness usually associated with full-fledged capitalism.

The story of the Wage Earners Savings Bank (and black business more generally) and its connections to the sacred world comprise an important chapter in the history of the New South and the age of Booker T. Washington and his gospel of self-help, but the institutional roots of the largest business endeavors belong to an earlier age. The Wage Earners was a distant cousin of the mutual aid societies that appeared in the South in the late eighteenth century to provide free black people with life insurance. In the 1890s members of the black working classes continued to pool their resources, running mutual benefit societies to provide benefits for the sick, widows, orphans, and unemployed workers in exchange for regularly assessed fees. When black Savannahians organized the Wage Earners in 1901, they had a similar cooperative mission. The new bankers, wrote Booker T. Washington, sought to "give us an indication of the power latent in" black Americans "when they learn to combine their efforts." In its earliest days the bank was organized to encourage small wage earners to save a portion of their earnings and become depositors, which in turn would become the basis of community development. Annual reports featured pictures of the houses the Wage Earners built and sold to new black owners who paid "on the installment plan." The bank was a source of black pride, not only for its symbolic value but because it became an active force in community development, sometimes in distant cities. In 1907 it had deposits amounting to more than $12,000 and loans equaling nearly $16,000. By 1920 the bank held close to two million dollars in assets, which represented a larger capital base than some of the white-owned banks in Savannah. That year the bank purchased eleven buildings near 135th Street and Seventh Avenue in Harlem, New York City, and began offering mortgage loans to black Harlemites.[5]

In 1920, the president of the Wage Earners, L. E. Williams, was vice president of the late Booker T. Washington's National Negro Business League. Williams was also vice president of the Quality Amusement Corporation, a theatrical production company—which in erstwhile Gilded Age fashion the bank also invested in. A less customary action for a bank president was Williams's support for railroad workers who went out on strike against the Atlantic Coast Line Railroad in 1922. His ten-dollar contribution to the strike fund far outstripped congregational offerings from Saint Philip African Methodist Episcopal, Bolton Street Baptist, First Bryan, and First African churches and donations from an assortment of individuals, including Saint John Baptist's pastor William Grey, Nathan Roberts, Sol Johnson, Pastor

John Q. Adams from Mount Zion Baptist, Baptist minister E. H. Quo, and the Royal Undertaking Company.[6]

Notwithstanding middle-class and elite support of the striking railroad workers—and other wage earners—the link between the classes in black Savannah in the years following slavery was fading. Nowhere was this clearer than on the board of directors' rosters of the largest businesses. In 1920 Henry B. Wright represented the last trace of working-class leadership on the Wage Earners directorship, and his death in February of that year ushered out the old era for good. In addition to his leadership of the black-owned bank, Wright, an active member of the First Bryan Baptist Church and a trustee of Charity Hospital—the city's medical facility for black Savannahians—had earned his living as a porter at Nichols Shoe Store on East Broughton Street, the main drag running through the center of the white business district. Shortly before his death he had been promoted to salesman on Saturdays. Although Wright was only forty-six years old when he was "called home to his master," hard work, self-control, and thrift had rewarded him handily. He and his wife, Mary, who worked as a hairdresser in their home, owned their home on East Gwinnett Street.[7]

By 1920 an interlocking directorate of black churches and black businesses sustained Black Christian Nationalism. Church deacon boards spawned relationships that were carried over into secular life, and relationships forged in the business world often gave new momentum to sacred leadership. Deacons Albert B. Singfield, Daniel Simmons, and Nathan Roberts, from three of the city's largest black Baptist churches, sat on the Wage Earners Board of Directors. From there they guided and disseminated a cooperative spirit that issued first from their respective communities of faith. As the leaders of the bank they were spiritual pilots in the quest for earthly deliverance from poverty and want. Nathan Roberts was president of the Savannah Undertaking Establishment, and unlike Wright and earlier generations of black leadership, he relied solely on black business trade for his living. Through his various connections, especially at the Wage Earners, Roberts became part of a state network of black leadership. In 1930 he was a delegate to the state Republican Party convention. His wife, Victoria, also active in First Bryan, was a leader in Savannah's Federation of Colored Women's Clubs, and in 1925 she became president of the First District of the Woman's Convention of the state General Missionary Baptist Convention. Singfield served alongside Roberts on the board of deacons at First Bryan, a position that in all probability greased the wheels for Singfield's entrée onto the boards of the Savannah Undertaking Establishment and the Wage Earners. Singfield's

position as general manager of the (colored) Pilgrim Life and Health Insurance Company afforded him coveted professional autonomy. Since Baptists outnumbered other denominations in the city, they were most prominent, but there were others as well. J. C. Lindsay and Samuel J. Brown, elders in the A.M.E. churches, and Sol Johnson, publisher and editor of the voice of Savannah's black middle class, the *Savannah Tribune*, and a member of the First Congregational Church, sat on the Wage Earners Board of Directors as well.[8]

David Canty, an insurance agent who worked for Singfield at Pilgrim for many years, followed a path similar to Singfield's. In the early 1920s Canty was rewarded for his strong salesmanship and, in Singfield's words, for "deliver[ing] the goods," when he was promoted to superintendent of the Savannah district, a position he held for four years until he became district manager. In 1920 he joined with other insurance agents to form the Insurance Agents' Department Store, which turned out to be more an expression of black boosterism, a gesture of solidarity and brotherhood, than an enterprise grounded in business savvy. Canty and his colleagues located their new department store on Broad Street in the heart of the black business district, and in setting up the venture they employed the cooperative principles promoted by the National Negro Business League. Most likely they did not sell enough shares of capital (at ten dollars each) to get started, for it was barely heard of again. Canty's church activities earned him a reputation as a mover and shaker among Savannah's sacred leadership. He grew up in the fledgling though respectable Bethlehem Baptist Church, where he paid his dues, serving on nearly every committee before becoming a deacon in 1913. Ten years later Canty was ordained a minister, and the following year he was called to the pulpit. This was front-page news in the *Tribune*. "The beloved superintendent," wrote Singfield in characteristically sentimental language, "has recently developed into a religious leader, as well as a business leader."[9] It was a natural transition, one that Singfield well understood, and it illustrates the seamless web between black business and church work that formed the operational basis of Black Christian Nationalism.

The creation and sustenance of black institutional spaces radiated from a distinctly African American source. Ethnically segregated business, cultural, and religious institutions were not unique to black American life, but the impulse driving the creation of such institutions most certainly was. As the historian Lizabeth Cohen has argued in her study of European immigrant workers in Chicago, white ethnic groups created banks in the 1920s because collectively they were experiencing greater stability and affluence, and leaders feared that they would assimilate too much.[10] Black American leaders, on

the other hand, created banks and other institutions in the South in order to generate prosperity, an aspiration that was simply not available to them elsewhere, with the ultimate goal of assimilation. Ironically, it was *because* black people understood that their exclusion from mainstream institutional life was structural that they turned inward, striving for self-sufficiency. At the same time, they incorporated dominant explanations for their own lack of access to material resources that stressed culture and the individual.

Like leaders everywhere, the men and women who led black Savannah saw themselves representing the interests of all classes, including the middle and working classes, professionals and laborers, longtime city dwellers and new arrivals from the countryside. Their idea of Negro uplift was much more than a delineation of class distinction. They focused on inclusion and amalgamation, which sometimes incorporated an element of coercion; but most of all, in the early twentieth century, Savannah's black leaders regarded black progress as a corporatist endeavor that involved all black Savannahians in advancing the cause of group progress. This was an interclass philosophy that was grounded experientially in the leaders' day-to-day lives. The lengthy social processes of urbanization and racial segregation that began with emancipation influenced residential housing patterns, and social and religious life connected the various classes in black Savannah—and separated them from white Savannah in new ways. With the passage of time articulations of class distinctions among black Savannahians would become more pronounced in many areas of life. But in the early twentieth century Savannah's black middle-class leaders, far from being cloistered from the lower classes, understood their destiny as one and the same.

The Making of Black Savannah

Racial segregation in the South was a product not of slavery but freedom. Before the Civil War the wealthiest white and the poorest black Savannahians intermingled—a vital condition of the slave labor system to ensure discipline and keep in check the ever-present threat of insurrection. If slavery produced segregation it was of the white working classes, who had long been isolated from the structural nexus that joined black slaves and wealthy white Savannahians.[11] After the war the men and women to the manor born sought to distance themselves from their former slaves (and the white working class). No longer chattel or symbols of wealth and prestige, freedmen and women were now merely poor black people.

During the first decades of freedom the city stumbled forward, often unevenly, toward social segregation, first to separate the classes and then to separate black from white. In the earlier years class segregation appears to have

been not only acceptable, but even commonsensical. In 1866 policemen were instructed by city officials to arrest black and white vagrants who attempted to enter the city's public parks. Similarly, by custom freedmen and women and poor white people were permitted to walk only on the east side of Bull Street in downtown Savannah: the west side was designated the sidewalk of "quality." In 1872 white officials made their first bid to racially segregate the city's transportation system, an effort that was defeated when James Porter, chairman of the Board of Vestry at Saint Stephen's Episcopal Church, initiated a boycott. The ease with which black streetcar riders overturned the initiative suggests the lack of interest in racialized social segregation among white Savannahians of all classes. Well into the late 1870s black and white laborers lived in the same neighborhoods, while the few members of Savannah's "black aristocracy" lived among white people of the same class. In the late nineteenth century the boundaries separating black and white people remained porous. Fully codified racial segregation and exclusion would not be achieved in Savannah until after the beginning of the twentieth century; in 1906, despite another black boycott of the streetcars, the white hot southern political culture had become so brittle that white Savannahians demanded complete separation of black and white people, and Savannah's streetcars, among other places, became officially racially segregated.[12]

The racial segregation that appeared in residential housing patterns in the late 1880s was also an evolutionary process: it would not become universal or codified until after the turn of the century. The central downtown area of the city was becoming predominantly white, while black and white residents of more modest means resided in the east, west, and south. By 1900, three districts had emerged in which more than 50 percent of the residents were black. The densest concentration was in Yamacraw, from West Broad Street and extending to West Boundary on the west side and Oglethorpe to the south, just north of the main line of the Central of Georgia Railway. Yamacraw took its name from the Indian town that Chief Tomochichi (who they say was a friend of General Oglethorpe) established on the Savannah River bluff west of Savannah township in the early eighteenth century. With some incongruence First Bryan Baptist Church—one of the "historic three" mainline churches in the city's black Baptist denomination—stood dead center in Yamacraw amid the poverty-inscribed shacks and lean-tos. Although waterfront industries had pushed the district southward from the bluff, according to one observer, on the eve of World War II it was still so "close to the river that some of the small shanties rattle[d] when winds roar[ed] across the water."[13]

A second neighborhood, "Old Fort," got its name during the American

Revolution. Located in the extreme northeastern section of the city, it was bounded by Broughton on the south, and Price, and Liberty and Bee Road on the east. Visitors to Old Fort in the late 1930s observed the "[d]usty, windy lanes border[ing] with rows of squat wooden houses, wide unpaved streets on each side with paintless one-story frame structures, the smells of fishboats, fertilizer plants and escaping gases, and overshadowing all, the gigantic gas reservoirs." It would be several more years before the city would pave the streets of this district or provide streetlights. The third section, located to the south of Old Fort, was bounded by Jones on the north and Henry on the south, and it was where the remnants of the small but persistent free black community that survived the antebellum period could be found. This area, unlike Yamacraw and Old Fort, retained elite elements of black Savannah, and in the 1920s it was where many of the city's black leaders resided. Neat, two-story painted frame houses lined the wide paved streets broken by narrow alleys running east and west behind them. These three districts show the beginning of residential class stratification in black Savannah.[14]

By 1920 the city's boundaries had been extended a few times, and several additional mostly black working-class districts had emerged. Frogtown and Currytown were tucked inside the western limits of the city just south of Yamacraw. These communities, which had been hastily constructed to accommodate the rapidly increasing black population, lacked city services almost entirely. There were no sidewalks to separate the small, unpainted houses, behind which stood outhouses, from the unpaved dirt streets. The Ogeechee Canal cut through the center of the district, leaving little space for kitchen gardens, a mainstay of the poor, black and white. Nevertheless, one witness observed a decade later during the leanest years of the Great Depression "small patches of earth green with collards and turnips" squeezed between the tiny shacks; and "almost every 'stoop' was decorated with a row of plants in tins of assorted dimensions." In the mid-1920s the *Tribune* reported that Old Fort, Yamacraw, Frogtown, and other densely populated and "decidedly colored neighborhoods" lacked sewage facilities and running water. Health indicators correlated with these deficiencies. In 1929, despite the near demographic parity between black and white Savannahians, mortality rates in the black population were almost twice as high. In 1928, according to the city's Department of Health, 475 white people died as a result of "natural causes," compared with 971 black people. Live and stillbirths also reflected the inequality in public health and sanitation.[15]

By the third decade of the twentieth century, the border of Old Yamacraw had drifted south as more and more people from rural sections of South Carolina and Georgia made their way into the city. The boundaries of Yamacraw

now extended to the Ogeechee Canal on the northern border, Musgrove Creek on the western border, and all the way to Liberty Street. A demographic shift had taken place in Yamacraw between 1880 and 1920 as well. At the end of the nineteenth century, the black and white populations were more or less proportionately equal, whereas by 1920 Yamacraw was 85 percent black. The majority of the 628 white residents of Yamacraw were not from Georgia, or even from the South. They were immigrants: mostly Jews from Russia (referred to as "Hebrews" in the census), Romanians, and Germans. There were a number of Greeks, a smattering of Irish, and Syrians, and at least one Turkish family. None listed English as their native language.[16]

A glance at the demographics of Yamacraw provides a snapshot of the first leg of a historical journey into America's Deep South. Mediterranean migration from southern Europe and the Ottoman Empire began to climb in the 1880s; but in 1920 only a handful of second-generation immigrants remained. The vast majority were not native born, suggesting that Yamacraw had been a point of entry for earlier generations of white immigrants. As Yamacraw evolved into a black ghetto, it became more affordable to those just off the boat. The paucity of second-generation immigrants shows that the new arrivals were closer to civic assimilation than those whose ancestry determined they were black. While there might well have been a system of "difference" operating by which one might be both white and ethnically distinct from other white people—and even inferior to Anglo-Saxons—from the outset these people were able to move about the city as native white people did. Most significantly, they did not encounter barriers to citizenship and legal and political rights. They never had to "become white," as some might argue; nor was there a "cultural process" of "race" in operation, as others would suggest.[17]

Black residents of Yamacraw were transient as well, although unlike Europeans, the transitory nature of their residency did not precede their assimilation into Savannah's broader civic culture. Racial exclusion and relegation to menial employment opportunities as well as political disfranchisement prevented that. Yamacraw endured a reputation as one of the toughest neighborhoods of the city. Many of those who did not escape in the first quarter of the twentieth century, either by choice or by proscription, were second-, third-, or even fourth-generation residents. Poor black Savannahians would have found it difficult to accrue the necessary resources to relocate to one of the "better" areas of the city where black professionals and "respectable" members of the working classes resided. Residential segregation produced black communities that were either the poorest of the poor or solid middle class: there was nothing in between.

If one of the indices of neighborhood stability was property ownership, the low rate of homeownership in Yamacraw illustrates a depth of precariousness. Out of a population of 4,147, only eleven families owned their homes; and of those, seven were black. The majority of the residents of this community were unskilled manual workers. The men worked as laborers, hucksters, and draymen, while most women worked out of their homes as laundresses.[18] Absent from this area were the insurance agents, clerks, teachers, mail carriers, and other federal government workers that characterized the middle-class sections of the city. Even the plethora of vanity service entrepreneurs—the barbers, "hair culturists," and seamstresses—who worked and lived in the more stable neighborhoods did not appear in Yamacraw. Who was going to pay for their services?[19]

Albert Singfield and his wife, Anna, lived a universe and not quite two and a half miles south of Yamacraw. The Singfields owned their home on Fortieth Street, between West Broad and Burroughs. Albert Singfield, a deacon at First Bryan Baptist Church, was the general manager of the black-owned Pilgrim Life Insurance Company, a member of the board of directors of the Wage Earners, and a well-known civic leader. Robert Gadsen, a public school teacher and principal and a member of the city's elite black First Congregational Church, lived four blocks south on West Thirty-sixth Street. Many of those who lived between and around the Singfields and Gadsens were members of the "respectable" working class. Some were skilled laborers—bakers and auto mechanics, carpenters and plasterers—and many more were servants, laundresses, and chauffeurs. Out of 2,725 families, 207, approximately 7.5 percent, were property owners.[20]

Population density and the proportion of white relative to black residents in the same census districts were other measures of community stability. The Singfields and Gadsens' district had a relatively lower proportion of black to white residents (65 percent) than Yamacraw (85 percent). Census data for another elite black neighborhood, this one southeast of Forsythe Park (bounded by Duffy on the north and Thirty-first Street East on the south, and East Broad and Bull streets) show a community with an even lower population density (2,383 residents or 57 percent lower than Yamacraw's density), and 25 percent of the entire population was black. Here the proportion of black property owners to the black population, at 4.7 percent, was slightly higher than the proportion of white property owners to the white population, 4.2 percent, reflecting a more or less equal degree of stability.[21]

What all of this demonstrates is that the smaller the proportions of black people in the total population of a given area, the higher their status. In the neighborhood southeast of Forsythe Park there were 613 black residents and 1,770 white; 76 of the white residents were property owners compared to

29 black property owners. Not surprisingly, this area produced more black leaders than any other section of the city. Rev. N. H. Whitmire, pastor of Mount Tabor Baptist Church, resided here, as did Mrs. Mary L. Ayers, an active member of the historic mainline First African Baptist Church and the State Baptist Convention. Mary was a leader of the voter registration campaign following the 1920 ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution and an active supporter of the Baptist Convention's Central City College—which since 1899 was located in Bibb County outside Macon. Mary Ayers lived with her husband, William, a deacon at First African, on the exclusive 500 block of Henry Street, between Price and East Broad. Mary was listed in the census as a secretary, and given existing racial proscriptions, it is safe to assume she worked for a black-owned enterprise. William Ayers was a self-employed building contractor. On the same block lived William Harris, one of the city's fourteen black physicians; John W. Jamerson, one of the city's two black dentists; Paul E. Perry, vice president of the Mechanics Savings Bank and an insurance agent; and two of the city's four black lawyers, including the prominent civic leader James G. Lemon. Rev. William G. Alexander, pastor of Saint Philip A.M.E., also lived on the block. One block south of Henry, on Anderson Street, lived Edgar Blackshear, a "cashier" at the Wage Earners Savings Bank, and Deacon W. S. Roundfield, president of the board of deacons at the historic Second Baptist. All owned their homes, and many of their wives were listed in the census as having "no occupation," which is to say, they worked as full-time homemakers, raising their children and keeping the fires stoked and ready for their men to bring home the bacon. Other women from this relatively privileged group worked out of their homes in the skilled crafts—typically as dressmakers and seamstresses.[22]

While the concentration of professionals in this neighborhood was relatively high, not every family was headed by a member of the professional class; nor was every homeowner a professional or even a skilled artisan. Cross-class associations and marital unions naturally resulted from social arrangements that involved, among other things, exclusion from numerous occupations that recent immigrant ethnic groups from Europe were beginning to gain access to during the same period. In his study of Philadelphia just before the beginning of the twentieth century, W. E. B. Du Bois invented the sociological category "respectable working class," whose members included breadwinners with "steady remunerative work," who earned enough to maintain for their families "comfortable circumstances, with a good home." E. Franklin Frazier argued in the 1960s that the class structures that emerged before World War II in black communities were not based strictly on oc-

cupation and income, but had their own internal logic that was predicated on racial autonomy, education, and behavior. Without question, what offered status in black communities—postal workers and Pullman porters, for example—was understood as servile to many white Americans. More recently, Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham wrote that elite African Americans considered members of the black working classes respectable as long as they "opposed lower-class idleness and vice on the one hand and high society's hedonism and materialism on the other." All of these assertions rang true in the classy neighborhood southeast of Forsythe Park. Take Robert and Roena McNichols, who lived next door to Dr. and Mrs. Jamerson. Robert McNichols worked as a porter in a drug store, his wife was a public school teacher, and they owned their home. Rev. Whitmire lived on the same block as a servant, a librarian, a chauffeur, a teacher, a hotel waiter, and a machinist. There was even a washerwoman or two and a sprinkling of servants and laborers living among this "better class."[23]

The question of class, status, and skin color is a tricky one, especially when attempting to make generalizations. Some scholars have emphasized a long-standing correlation between lighter hue and social standing in the Deep South seaport cities and even an inverse connection between color and degree of militancy everywhere. Skin color in Savannah, however, did not determine much of anything, not in the 1920s and not in the late nineteenth century. If it did, one would assume that Nathan and Victoria Roberts, homeowners, literate, and independent—Nathan a successful undertaker, a leader of the Wage Earners, and active churchman, and Victoria a full-time homemaker and the mother of three—were mulatto. As it turns out, the Roberts family was listed as black in the manuscript census. They lived on the same block as William and Silvia O'Connor. William was a "wage laborer" for a dry cleaner, and Silvia worked for a private (most likely white) family as a laundress. Their eldest daughter, Clara, aged nineteen, worked as a "hair culturist" out of their home; it is not beyond the realm of possibility that the darker-hued, full-time homemaker Victoria Roberts was one of her clients. Clara, like her parents, was a light-skinned mulatto; as renters and workers in subservient occupations her parents—unlike the Roberts—enjoyed relatively little independence from white Savannahians.[24]

A shortage of correlative factors appears again and again among middle-class black Savannahians. While members of the city's elite professional class—the doctors and dentists and bankers and lawyers—were almost uniformly mulatto, they did not live sequestered from darker-skinned members of the black middle and respectable working classes. The residential admixture of caste and class advanced the idea of group solidarity, a cross-class

collective destiny as it was expressed through Black Christian Nationalism. If we return to the fashionable 500 block of East Henry between Price and Bull streets, we find ourselves in a rainbow of black humanity, a veritable jumble of colors and occupations. Some families were homeowners, and others were not. Some were among the handful of black professionals in the city, while others were unskilled workers; and the wives and mothers in some households pursued those occupations with a singular devotion—because they could—while others were wageworkers as well. The black dentist John Jamerson and his wife, Alene, both mulatto, resided on East Henry a few doors down from Mary and William Ayers, a black couple who translated the benefits of racial autonomy into civic and political activism. Walking in the other direction toward Bull Street one stumbled on the home of Paul E. Perry and his wife, Susie, and their four children. Both mulatto, Perry was vice president of the Mechanics Savings Bank, and Susie was a full-time homemaker. Just next door was the darker-skinned Walter J. Carson, a porter at the Gas Company, and two doors down from him resided the lighter-skinned William Harris, a physician, homeowner, and husband to stay-at-home wife Julia May. To further confuse attempts to find direct relationships between hue and status were the "mixed" marriages, as was the case with the lighter-skinned Albert Singfield and his black wife, Anna. Like their dark-skinned neighbors—the Ayers—the Singfields were active lay leaders in their respective mainline Baptist faith communities and active in civic and business affairs.

Putting aside the question of shades of blackness and its relationship to status and leadership, the mixture of classes and occupations reflected the distinctive nature of urban black social organization in the early twentieth-century South. The better the neighborhood, the more racially heterogeneous (black and white) it was, and more variable in terms of class, occupation—and hue. Conversely, the poorest members of black Savannah lived in communities that were more racially homogeneous, working class, all black, and with similar occupations. At the bottom of the socioeconomic ladder the color line was congealing, while at the other end of the spectrum, porters and doctors could still live next door to each other in communities that were more racially diverse. This was not an expression of economic democracy (or warm and fuzzy multiculturalism) but an indication that by 1920 caste was coming to replace class more and more in residential housing patterns. It was only a matter of time before the more middle-class neighborhoods would become more racially uniform. Class uniformity would come later still, with expanded educational and occupational opportunity, but census records for 1920 continued to list numerous "mixed marriages" between "mulattos" and "Negroes"

in all areas of the city. This belies the assumption that skin color dating back to the antebellum era correlated neatly to produce black aristocracies similar to those of the other Deep South seaport towns.

Segregation and Congregation

Just after the turn of the twentieth century the manicured gardens, the gentle landscaping, and the picnic grounds in the main area of Forsythe Park became off-limits to black Savannahians with two exceptions: black domestic servants whose charges were children of the white elite were permitted in the park any hour of the day, and at dawn and dusk day servants were permitted to run through the main area of the park between their white employees' homes and their own families. The park furnished a social and geographical line through Savannah. City officials paid homage to the separate and unequal precepts embodied in the 1896 *Plessy* decision when they isolated the southern-most tip, which had been left undeveloped, for society's black mudsills and bottom rails. In many areas of public life, segregation cast black people as inferior and subhuman. But at other times, and often in critical ways, black people lived within reach yet beyond the world of white control. Since the main area of Forsythe Park was off-limits to black Savannahians for recreation, the city gave them another park, this one on Augusta Road, which they named after Abraham Lincoln. Located three miles from the center of town, Lincoln Park became one of the social centers of black Savannah. The Fairview Ball Park, inaugurated in 1922 at Forty-fifth and Hopkins, became another setting for black recreation. In the spring of that year the Colored Interstate Baseball League organized a local team to mark the inauguration of the park with a three-day series between the Colored Savannah Baseball Team and the Bacharach Giants of Atlantic City.[25]

Limited opportunity for black southerners promoted class heterogeneity, not only in marital unions and residential housing patterns, as examined in the previous section, but in social and religious associations. Interclass associations stirred among the city's black middle-class leaders a steadfast belief in a shared destiny that connected all members of black Savannah. This idea found its way into the Dunbar Moving Picture Theatre when it opened its doors for the first time in the early 1920s. The *Tribune* boasted that the Dunbar was "without doubt the most complete Negro moving picture house in the state." Located in the heart of Savannah's black business district at the southwest corner of West Broad and Gaston streets, the theater kept its promise to "make a specialty of Negro pictures of high character" when it commenced its first season with Oscar Micheaux's *Symbol of the Unconquered*. The movie theater became one of a handful of places outside the churches

where black Savannahians could assemble; they therefore used it as a place from which to advance civic causes. Promoters of "Negro Health Week," for example, presented a play to illustrate health and sanitation matters that were of special concern to black Savannahians at the Dunbar in 1926, and the following year Pullman porters used the theater to organize a strike.[26]

This idea of a shared destiny was illustrated again when elite black Savannahians organized the Palmetto Country Club "at Hope Crest, on [the] salts, near the Isle of Hope" amid "a profusion of beautiful palmetto trees" in October 1923. While the country club was designed to provide black middle-class and elite black Savannahians with "one of the most delightful recreational centers in the state, where all forms of out-door sports will be indulged in," including tennis, swimming, and fishing, and the "indoor pleasures" of a café and "dancing pavilion," the Palmetto's directors did not ignore pressing social issues. Six months after they organized the club they placed an advertisement in the *Tribune* urging their fellow black Savannahians to register to vote. The "failure to register keeps the freeman yet a slave," read the notice. The Nineteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution had recently been ratified, and for a brief historical moment black women in Savannah led successful campaigns to get their sisters to the polls during municipal elections. Echoing the spirit of "uplift" and self-help, and Booker T. Washington's bootstrap ideology, which had a tendency to assign responsibility for social problems to the behavior of individuals rather than government policies, the message continued with the assertion that the "young Negro's dereliction of his suffrage rights is the one and only great cause of unfair and unjust discrimination against the Negro race everywhere."[27]

Secular venues for black social congregation and recreation, while significant to the whole scheme of black social and civic development, were far outnumbered by the black churches that continued to perform a multiplicity of sacred, secular, and civic operations. In 1920 Savannah's *City Directory* listed 73 black churches scattered throughout the city. Fifty-three were Baptist, some large and many small—including four prayer houses connected to the oldest and largest churches. (The prayer house provided a way for the "mother church" to minister to those who lived in less densely populated areas that were too far from the center of town to regularly attend a pastored church.) A distant second to the Baptist denomination were six African Methodist Episcopal churches, two Methodist Episcopal churches, and one Methodist church. For Savannah's black elites there were two black Episcopal churches, and the First Congregational Church, which had been organized by the neo-abolitionist American Missionary Association during the first days of freedom. In the beginning, black and white Congregationalists prayed together,

testifying to the permeable racial boundaries in the postwar urban South; but by 1920 the color line had hardened, and the church's interracial caste had long disappeared. As a relic of the earlier era First Congregational Church, which had more intellectuals and college graduates among its membership than any other black church, endured in a wealthy section of white Savannah, on Habersham at Taylor. Butler Presbyterian, also organized as a biracial church during the previous century, by 1920 had succumbed to racial segregation as well. The black Seventh Day Adventists congregated on Forty-third Street between Florence and Harden, a few blocks from the denomination's white congregation. The primitive church movement that ignited and spread across the North in the late nineteenth century had not yet made significant inroads in Savannah or the rest of the South: only one Pentecostal and one Apostolic church were listed in the *City Directory*.[28]

Savannah's black Baptist denomination has a long and distinguished record in the annals of American church history. Its genesis and evolution mirrored the white Baptist denomination, not surprising since white religious benefactors became midwives to the emergence of what became the largest black Protestant denomination in the region. Its origins reflected and contributed to the complex and ambivalent liminal place of black religion in a largely Christian society that was deeply committed to racial slavery. In the late eighteenth century, for example, Andrew Bryan had been traveling up and down the Savannah River, missionizing among his fellow slaves on farms and plantations when he so impressed a white Baptist named Abraham Marshall with his oratorical gifts that in 1788 Marshall created a pulpit for Bryan in a Baptist church he organized for slaves in the Yamacraw district of Savannah less than a mile away from where another black Baptist church named First African would stand on Franklin Square. The church has since been called the Bryan Baptist Church, and for generations members of First African and First Bryan have engaged in vigorous debates, each church issuing annual declarations concerning the year of each church's founding and holding elaborate anniversary celebrations to mark the date. To this day the conflict has not been settled. While the question of which came first has yet to be agreed upon, nobody questions the numerical ascendancy of the Baptist denomination in black Savannah. More than any other, they continued to match the black population as the city grew. In 1802 a third church, the Second Baptist Church, was organized on the east side of downtown Savannah, at Houston and President streets. Originally called Second Colored Baptist Church, like the two black Baptist churches that preceded it, its relationship to white Savannah was at the same time predicated on a combination of white largesse and black autonomy. Second Baptist grew out of First Bryan with the direct

intervention of Rev. Henry Holcomb, pastor of the white Savannah Baptist Church at the same time that black Baptists had come to outnumber white members in his congregation.[29]

Together, these three churches—First African, First Bryan, and Second Baptist—formed the nucleus of "mainline" black Baptist life that would flourish over the next century and a half. By the end of World War I the education and intellectual caliber of the pastor, the ability of the church to support the pastor financially, and, increasingly, the socioeconomic positions of its congregants determined the status of each church. Pastors of the historic churches were civic leaders with influence that extended beyond the church congregation to, in some instances, the denomination itself. Of all the city's black Baptist clergy, they had the best educations. Many were Morehouse men, some were graduates of Atlanta University, and at least one had attended Oberlin College. Two completed a year or two of graduate work in theology, one at the University of Chicago and the other at Northwestern.[30]

The "historic three" black Baptist churches were places where black intellectuals, the "race leaders" of the day, held mass political meetings, listened to lectures by other black leaders and thinkers of repute, and gathered for cultural events. The intellectual depth of the lay and ordained leadership at First African was reflected in an impressive roster of black speakers that served as a bridge between black Savannah and black America, and occasionally even linked black Savannah to Pan-Africanism. In 1924 W. E. B. Du Bois delivered a lecture to an overflow crowd about his recent trip to Liberia. The *Tribune*'s coverage of this event—and others like it—was a cross-pollination of reportage and racial boosterism: "The audience was given a splendid idea of the Liberians by the speaker who said that they were not a lazy people but energetic, thrifty, polite and progressive." Du Bois concluded his presentation with a statement that connected the "political aspect of the Negro in America" with the struggles of Liberians and a plug for the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. Kelly Miller, dean of Howard University, also appeared at First African, first in 1918 to address Howard's Alumni Association and again in 1927 to deliver a public lecture entitled "Education as a Factor in the Race Problem." And in 1938 Adam Clayton Powell Jr., the young black minister from Abyssinian Baptist Church in Harlem, New York City, addressed First African at its 150th anniversary celebration. Powell's oratorical skills were legendary, and he did not disappoint that day in Savannah. The spectators were "virtually lifted from their seats by the power and eloquence of his voice and speech," wrote a reporter for the *Tribune*. An "overflow audience of some twenty-five hundred people" squeezed into the church sanctuary to hear the minister from Harlem speak about the impor-

tance of black business, a potent force for the "economic emancipation of the Negro." Powell told his listeners: "Don't come to New York to solve your problems." Do not leave Savannah, he said. "Too many thousands of Negroes are starving in Harlem."[31]

The guest preachers and speakers who graced the pulpit at Second Baptist were also formidable "race leaders," typically of local and regional standing. John Hope, the president of Atlanta University (and a Baptist minister), Arnold E. Gregory, the erudite pastor of Savannah's First Congregational Church, L. K. Williams, president of the National Baptist Convention, Inc., and Professor R. W. Gadsden, principal of the black East Broad Street School (and a member of First Congregational) appeared at Second Baptist in the 1920s and 1930s. Second Baptist's speakers list was top heavy with educators demonstrating the church's interest and commitment to learning and knowledge. It was the first black church in Savannah to introduce the Vacation Bible School, which later would become a mainstay of denominational education, and its leaders spearheaded the organization of the city's black Parent-Teacher Association. Moreover, its pastors were leaders in the decades-long struggle for more schools for Savannah's black population.[32]

In the 1920s signs of class stratification that were becoming discernable on the directorships of black businesses were appearing in the mainline black Baptist churches. While congregations brought together doctors, schoolteachers, and postal workers to worship alongside hucksters, manual laborers, domestic servants, and laundresses, church leadership was changing. On First African's deacon board for the first time in the church's history, middle-class men were beginning to outnumber those from the working classes. John S. Delaware, who had been to college and had a coveted position as a postal carrier, and F. S. Belcher, a physician, joined in the 1920s. There were others, too, including an insurance salesman; while those from the old guard were disproportionately men who had never been to college or even high school—a house painter, a porter, and a worker in a fertilizer factory.[33]

This new impulse toward class divisions involved a spawning of numerous smaller churches, especially from the 1890s until the end of World War I. During that period several of the younger churches that had grown out of one of the historic three had begun to build sizable congregations. New churches were organized to keep up with the growing population as the city expanded, especially to the east and west. While these churches never attained the prestige of First Bryan, First African, and Second Baptist, their pastors would come to exert considerable influence in the sacred and denominational life of the city. Relative to the rest of Savannah's black population, these men were well educated, and they articulated various forms of racial progress that

combined deep religious conviction with a commitment to uplift. While the membership of the historic three was not uniformly middle class, the members of the younger churches were much more homogeneously working class.[34]

The history of Saint John Baptist Church illustrates the emergence of one such "second tier" church that by the 1920s had achieved prominence and denominational authority in Savannah. Organized by Rev. William Grey, Saint John opened its doors in 1891 on the east side of the city with the support of First African. Grey grew up in rural South Carolina, and according to an "official" church history, after he arrived in Savannah he worked as "a coachman for many years for the old Cohen family." Although "Father Grey," as his congregation affectionately referred to him, assumed the pulpit with little formal education, his oratorical abilities placed him first among equals in the city's Baptist leadership. By 1922, Saint John's claimed a membership of 3,500, rivaling any urban church of its day. During his more than forty years in the pulpit, Grey was a leader in city and state denominational affairs. In the 1920s he organized the Berean Baptist Academy, a short-lived elementary school for Savannah's underserved black population run by the Berean Baptist Association that during the 1920s brought together ministers and their congregations from south Georgia, including the barrier islands. By the time his career ended in 1926, Grey had served as president of Savannah's Baptist Ministers Union, moderator of the Berean Baptist Association, and vice president of the State Missionary Baptist Association. Although Grey arrived at Saint John without so much as a high school diploma, he practiced what he preached and attended Georgia State Industrial College's normal school, where he received an associate bachelor's degree in 1900.[35]

Grey's successor at Saint John, Rev. E. O. S. Cleveland, arrived at Saint John in 1926 where he would remain until his death thirty-seven years later. Cleveland's résumé well reflected Grey's accomplishments in establishing and sustaining the church: he had one of the best educations available to a black person in the South during the period. Cleveland had received an American Baptist Home Missionary Society education at Americus Institute, a small black Baptist liberal arts secondary school in Americus, Georgia, before attending Morehouse College in Atlanta. Like Grey, Cleveland was an "institutional" pastor, mainly concerned with denominational affairs. While there were a few "white collar" members of the faith community, the vast majority were laborers, including many who worked for the Atlantic Coast Line Railroad. A smattering of service entrepreneurs, especially barbers and hairdressers, appeared on the membership list as well, including Madame Cargo, the proprietress of the Cargo Beauty School. Absent were members of

Savannah's black professional class, including teachers, and men with those good and hard-to-come-by government jobs in the postal service.[36]

Mount Zion Baptist Church, organized in the early 1890s, was another second-tier Baptist church that came to occupy an important place in the city's community of black Baptists. According to the recollections of Pastor John Q. Adams, who assumed the pulpit in 1921 (where he remained for the next forty-seven years until his retirement), many who joined Mount Zion were former members of First African, and as was customary in such circumstances, the two churches maintained a close relationship. Born and raised in Savannah—his grandfather was a slave—Adams was a "son" of Second Baptist, where he was baptized in 1907 at the age of thirteen and ordained ten years later. The first generation in his family to attend college, Adams was a Morehouse man. His father worked as a packer in a dry goods company, and his mother was a full-time homemaker. When Adams assumed the pulpit at Mount Zion there were between two and three hundred members, the majority of them women working as low-paid domestic servants. Although Mount Zion promised Adams a salary of $90 a month, his earnings from his teaching position at Cuyler Junior High, the only black junior high in the city until after World War II, were a more dependable source of income in the early days. Besides, teaching was Adams's calling, no less important than preaching; he kept his position at Cuyler long after the church could support a full-time pastor. During the leanest years Adams said white Baptists were generous in their support of Mount Zion. They took missionary collections for the church in their own congregations and attended Adams's services, where they demonstrated their munificence.[37]

By the 1920s there were several other second-tier black Baptist churches, including Beth Eden, whose lineage was traceable to the historic three. Located not far from the center of town, at Gordon and Lincoln streets, it grew out of Second Baptist in 1890, and the two churches maintained a particularly close relationship in the 1920s and 1930s. Beth Eden's pastor, N. M. Clarke, was a prolific writer from the West Indies who penned numerous columns in *The Georgia Baptist*, as well as the city's black newspaper, on a range of social and religious issues. Clarke sometimes adopted harsh "tough love" positions with the goal of elevating the Negro from his lowly position. He earned a reputation for imperiousness when, for example, he argued that the plethora of storefront Baptist churches led by untrained preachers should be shut down, for they were a menace to black progress.[38] Clarke was good friends with First African's Rev. T. J. Goodall in the early 1920s, and in 1935 he was invited by the most elite of Savannah's interdenominational Christian leadership to participate in welcoming Rev. L. M. Terrell to First Bryan

Baptist. Like those of Grey and Cleveland of Saint John, Clarke's main extra-churchly concerns were denominational.[39]

Numerous smaller and marginal churches comprised the "third tier" of Savannah's black Baptist faith community. Pastors of these churches generally did not have formal educations, and their labors were confined to their faith communities, which frequently numbered more than one when the churches were too impoverished to support a full-time pastor. In 1922, Rev. R. G. Carter pastored Mount Moriah on Ogeechee Road and Peaceful Baptist; both claimed modest congregations of twenty. Similarly, Rev. R. H. Prince served Jerusalem Baptist with twenty-nine members in 1922 and Sweetfield of Eden with a membership of sixty-five. Neither congregation could afford to support a full-time pastor. Prince earned his income from a "tonsorial establishment" that he owned and operated since 1909.[40]

Many of the more marginal churches appeared a generation or two after the second-tier churches and by the late 1920s and 1930s were still struggling for stability and survival. Tremont Temple Baptist Church was organized in 1922 out of Union Baptist. Connors Temple Baptist Church was established five years later as a result of a schism in Union when Rev. N. C. Connor, who had developed quite a following preaching in rural counties, gathered together a few deacons and named his new church after himself. Surviving records for these churches are positively scant, correlating with the officers' weak literacy skills, poor educations, and low-paying and low-level jobs. Many of these churches appealed to new arrivals from the countryside, women and men who were adjusting to the new confinements and possibilities of urban life. One member of Connors Temple Baptist Church, Naomi Hill, recalled the preacher Connor coming to where she lived in Effingham County in the late 1920s, when she was eleven or twelve, to conduct a week-long revival meeting. So captivated was she by his charisma and oratorical gift that she became a Baptist herself. In 1930, when she moved with her family to Savannah—where her mother would no longer have to sharecrop, and her father could continue to work as a dredger along the Savannah River—she searched high and low for the preacher who had inspired her so, attending services along the way at First Bryan and Union Baptist and Sunday school at Tabernacle Baptist. It took her a while to find Connor and his church because the "preaching machine," as the State Baptist Association once referred to him, had not yet made a name for himself in Savannah. Hill's persistence eventually paid off, and she became a life-long member of Connor's church.[41]

Other third-tier black Baptist churches formed to serve expanding communities that were, in the minds of founding members, "under churched."

Central Baptist, ensconced in one of the more impoverished "colored sections" of Savannah known as Hitch Village, was organized in November 1900 to serve new arrivals from rural areas. Central Baptist's second minister in six years was Jefferson S. Irby, who was no stranger to leading a young, struggling faith community. He had organized Tabernacle Baptist the same year Central Baptist appeared on the scene. In 1906, after affording Tabernacle some stability and a future, Irby accepted the call to make Central Baptist his vocational home. Irby had been born into slavery in Louisville, Georgia, in 1850. Forty-five years later he arrived in Savannah as a country-style, fire-and-brimstone preacher. According to the Church Page in the *Tribune*, Irby "ceased not presenting the receipt of his religion in warning Israel of her sins, and the House of Jacob of her transgressions." In 1906 when he arrived at Central Baptist, he found "the old church house was in its waste." The new pastor worked hard to raise the funds to improve the structure of the worship house, and he reinvigorated the congregation, which by 1927 reported three hundred members.[42]

The early autonomy and rapidly developing strength of black churches during the antebellum period and after, coupled with exclusionary strategies deployed by rigid arrangements of white power, created a space for the religious institutions to form the foundation of black civic life. In Savannah, an assemblage of religious, social, and economic institutions evolved from the three historic Baptist churches, themselves born in the harbors of slavery. In 1907, Booker T. Washington, writing about black business, said the "Negro race" must "learn to turn the very obstacles and difficulties of its position to advantage."[43] The city's most important church pastors operated on the assumption that despite—or maybe even because of—the troubles they saw, black-owned business had sacred and secular redemptive powers that would lead to black progress and full participation in American society and a realization of the American dream of democracy.

Black Christian Nationalism

By the early 1920s black business was at its peak in Savannah. Black churches continued to influence all areas of black civil life, fostering a sacralized black business ethos. From this consonance of business and religion surfaced what I identify as Black Christian Nationalism. Commerce provided not only the material foundation for the rising middle classes but also a basis for black leaders' divinatory understanding of community development and racial progress. The merging of Christianity with business nourished a dual understanding of redemption, one that was at the same time earthly and other-

worldly; and the nationalism that emerged, rather than a striving for a state or even a separate political entity, was a metaphorical representation of social life.

Black Christian Nationalism was in broad agreement with American cultural practices and pervading attitudes in the early part of the twentieth century. It did not exist as a hermetically sealed worldview in parallel with or in opposition to American nationalism. The scholar Benedict Anderson, in his often-cited study *Imagined Communities*, argues that nationalism is not aligned with self-consciously held political ideologies, but with preexisting, expansive cultural frames, and it flows from as well as against these preceding worldviews. Drawing on these ideas, the cultural critic Homi Bhabha writes about the "liminal space" in any society where a national discourse is articulated everywhere including in the crevices of difference. It is in these nooks and crannies where borders overlap and bleed together—on the "margins of modernity"—as Bhabha put it, where nationalism vacillates. It is also where the meaning of this nationalism may be discovered. Black Christian Nationalism, then, was an organic lived experience, not a constructed political ideology. It was, to quote Bhabha again, "as much acts of affiliation and establishment as they [were] moments of disavowal, exclusion, and cultural contestation." This is not a postmodernist stance; it supports and even extends Du Bois's century-old veil metaphor. Black Savannahians articulated a discourse of nationalism everywhere, including in the liminal places where they lived a "two-ness," a double identity that was at once part of mainstream America and in opposition to it.[44]

All nations, whether metaphysical representations of belonging and destiny or political creations with recognized borders, rely on the power of myth to perpetuate the idea of indivisible community. This invention of myths requires the manufacturing of public memory, and it takes a multitude of forms. The most obvious is patriotism, shrouded in historical romanticism and deployed during times of war to inspire love of country and unite people behind a government's political and military aims. This celebratory and nostalgic approach to telling history appears not only in the service of the state during periods of international conflict. National ethnic groups have drawn on stories of progress and development to inspire ethnic pride under other circumstances, too. In Savannah, Daniel Simmons advanced the idea of a black nation with a heroic story of progress. By telling it at a National Negro Business League (NNBL) meeting, he brought it into the realm of public memory and affirmed the idea of an indivisible black America. Simmons's storytelling was a performative event in which he invented himself, and in the largest sense it was a primeval expression of the *Volk*. His was a tale of ad-

vancement in which insuperable obstacles are overcome, not just for himself but also for his people.

By World War I, Daniel Simmons, owner of the Savannah Mattress Factory, had achieved notable success in the world of business. The location of his factory made him, as the *Tribune* boasted, "the only colored man owning property on the Bay with an opening on the river." If this were not enough to distinguish his from other black-owned businesses that were clustered together on Broad Street, he earned additional respect for leasing the top story of the building to the Southern Cotton Oil Company, a white-owned firm.[45] By 1917 Simmons had caught the eye of Emmett J. Scott, Booker T. Washington's successor and secretary of the NNBL. Scott invited him to address the organization's annual meeting in Chattanooga, Tennessee. As the author of a story that was part allegory, part autobiography, Simmons became a living embodiment of how black people could advance their status if only they worked hard enough, exercised thrift, and abstained from vice and luxury. Simmons modestly revealed to his audience that the idea of speaking publicly before "this august body on the subject of 'Manufacturing and Selling Mattresses'" very "nearly scared [him] to death." On the surface, Simmons's story was pure Horatio Alger—an expression of individualism and progress. Like Alger, Simmons's story was calculated to inspire and instruct. Both tales placed the individual in a familiar national narrative to propose the idea of development as destiny. But as a black man Simmons would encounter additional problems that the mythical Horatio Alger never did:

> I was born in Allendale, Barnwell County, South Carolina and I lived on the farm until I was seventeen years old. When I started [out for Savannah], I had but twenty cents in my pocket; I walked that distance of between sixty and seventy miles and got into Savannah with five pennies in my pocket, managing to pick something to eat on the way at several farm houses where I stopped. One day I went down by the Bay [in Savannah] and sat down on the steps of one of the business houses along the street, and as I sat there looking down to the river, a man called me and said:
>
> "Say, boy, do you want to work?"
>
> I said: "Yes, Sir, I want to work."

Simmons was motioned into the C. M. McBride and Company, a small mattress factory, where he was hired to sweep the floor, run errands, and do odd jobs. "I set in to work for Mr. McBride and he made me feel perfectly at home; they didn't seem to be particular about whether I was colored or white," recalled Simmons. Until, that is, McBride told his foreman, Mr. Frank, to teach Simmons the trade. As it turned out, Frank "didn't like to teach a Negro

his trade and he flat-footedly refused to carry out the bosses' instructions." An argument ensued between the owner and the foreman, and by the end of the week Frank had resigned, and Simmons was learning the craft of making mattresses.

Several years later, after McBride folded and Simmons found himself working in another cotton factory, he elevated the concept of thrift to an art. "[W]hen the cotton bales would come into the factory and were being handled a good many of the tufts would drop on the floor," explained Simmons, and "each day I would save them up, [for] having had previous experience in mattress-making I knew the value of cotton." When he had accumulated a large enough pile he informed the foreman that he would like to use the cotton to make a mattress. The foreman agreed that all the cotton that fell on the floor would belong to Simmons, and one mattress grew into several, and those grew into several more, and before he knew it, Simmons was earning enough money making and selling mattresses to quit his job and go into business for himself.[46]

Simmons's narrative, like other national stories of progress, derived some of its strength from myth of origin. The structure of the story, as with post-1865 slave narratives—and Whig history itself—was a clean sweep from slavery to freedom. Like Booker T. Washington's *Up from Slavery* (the quintessential "American Dream" story), Simmons's drama was a struggle from poverty, ignorance, and weakness to a position of affluence and influence. Simmons's success was, in his own words, a direct result of "my humble efforts, close saving and taking advantage of opportunities whenever they came to my door."[47] It was also an internal matter that involved suppressing desire for luxury and vice, and (here is where the story takes on a particular cast unique to black America) a desire to strike back against Frank's crude racism. Instead of inspiring righteous anger, the story counsels patience and quietude. The fairness (and kindness) of white strangers like Mr. McBride and the refusal of his foreman to teach Simmons the trade represented the triumph of good over evil. It was an allegory about individual decency ultimately conquering pervasive racism and its legal codification of inequality. Consistent with the tenor of Black Christian Nationalism, Simmons counseled personal and group uplift, not militant struggle.

While his narrative fit into a larger political and cultural process—and aim—Simmons betrayed his own beginnings when he referred to his work as a census enumerator in 1900, between working for McBride and the second cotton factory, the job that he claimed enabled him to earn the necessary capital to start his own business. Working for the Census Bureau was a federal government job, which paid considerably higher wages than his menial

position in the cotton factory, suggesting that his journey was not a simple ascent from rags to riches. Gathering census data required solid literacy skills, more than an impoverished rural American in the nineteenth century was likely to have. As it turned out, before embarking on his adventure to Savannah as a young man, Simmons had finished high school in Brunson, South Carolina.[48] The point is not that Simmons did not struggle to achieve; but by obscuring his background, he was able to connect his story with a larger progression that represented a similar destiny for all who began life with nothing. Hard work, thrift, and a life without vice was the key to success, not the elimination of state and institutional obstacles. Simmons's story conformed to the perpetual popular notion of America as a classless society, or at least a view of a nation with permeable, temporary class boundaries.

Black Christian Nationalism as a worldview that fused a business agenda with Christianity is an example of how a specific cultural formation that produced a system of signification reflected a broader cultural framework in another way as well. At the turn of the twentieth century, a culture of desire and consumer capitalism was energetically reshaping earlier traditions of republicanism and Christian virtue on the American terrain; and it corresponded culturally to Black Christian Nationalism. In *Land of Desire*, the historian William Leach writes about the formula that combined the gospel of business and profit with spiritual concerns in his study of John Wannamaker, the country's most important merchant and philanthropist of the period. Wannamaker was a devoutly religious man, and he funded a nationally significant urban religious revival in 1876 led by his old friend, Dwight Moody. Moody was the Billy Graham of his time, the most influential evangelical preacher in the post–Civil War period (columns from the Moody Institute would later appear in Georgia's main black denominational newspaper). The revival drew thousands, including President Grant and the entire bench of the United States Supreme Court. Wannamaker also financed the Bethany Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia—an extravagant operation that employed a full orchestra to play at its worship services. Leach writes that Wannamaker created out of his church "one of America's prototypic institutional churches"; that is, "a new kind of church found in many denominations that served religious goals and also satisfied social and cultural needs." At Bethany there was something going every night of the week—lectures, choir rehearsals, Bible classes, concerts, sewing circles, missionary meetings, and the like. For years black churches had been addressing their members' social and cultural as well as spiritual needs. The point is not to demonstrate that black churches were first, but to show black American church practices embedded in American society and culture, shaping larger practices as well as being

shaped by them. The consequences of different histories in some respects appeared similar.[49]

While black Christians shared some of the symbols of Protestantism and capitalism, the meanings ascribed to them differed. The rhetorical strategies of the two groups were in fact compatible, but only superficially. If Wannamaker needed to find spiritual forgiveness for his material greed and excesses, as Leach argues, black businessmen in Savannah had no excesses to feel guilty about. The individual acquisitiveness that Wannamaker honed as he built his empire during the Gilded Age stands in sharp contrast to the more corporatist impulse that resulted from the suffering that white racist exclusion produced. Wannamaker was well entrenched in the capitalist world; indeed, he was a player. As a monopoly capitalist obliterating small-scale competition whenever and wherever necessary, he epitomized the idea that material interest was the primary value of human existence. As a philanthropist he used his position to civilize the uncivilized by indoctrinating them with lessons in Christian morality, which in his mind involved hard work, a respect for the time clock, and a temperate lifestyle that would ultimately afford each individual the ability to participate as producers and consumers in commodity capitalism. Wannamaker built YMCAs in India, Korea, and China, which black Christian leaders in Savannah would have whole-heartedly approved of, although not with the goal of creating new markets for department store magnates, or anyone else.[50]

This liminality that was shared by Savannah's black businessmen and Wannamaker ought not be confused with a deeper affiliation. An important distinction lies between Wannamaker's vision of himself as the monarch presiding over the Kingdom of Heaven and black businessmen's understanding of the Kingdom itself. The difference is between business and capitalism. Although both might co-exist under most circumstances in the modern world, and while in such instances the former is a driving force behind the latter, this was not the case in black Savannah during the interwar years. If modern capitalism can be defined as a particular set of social relations of production in which labor power is bought and sold, Savannah's black bankers and other entrepreneurs are perhaps better understood as "pre-capitalists." They were not engaged in production processes in which surplus value was pried from living labor and reinvested in manufacturing for increased productivity. The largest and most influential black business establishments were, in fact, small entrepreneurial ventures, employing a few wage workers, if any. These enterprises were mostly concerned with the well-being of all black Savannahians—elite and working class, new immigrants from the countryside and long-time city dwellers—rather than with individual or even class-based fortunes. To

be sure, black entrepreneurs sought to increase their incomes, but concentrations of wealth and the pursuit of money, even participation in production and commerce, do not alone define capitalism.

The rise of the thoroughly modern phenomenon of individualism accompanied an expanding market and state, and while black southerners were not invulnerable to such processes, Jim Crow segregation skewed their connections to markets as well as their relationship to the state. They did not have the same access to start-up capital, investment opportunities, technologies, or education in business and management techniques. This is not to suggest that black southerners were pre-modern in any real sense. That they built and sustained their own institutions that supported a vibrant civil society renders such a proposition out of the question. Still, the efforts of the city's black business leadership had more to do with advancing a collective, communal ethos than promoting bourgeois values of individualism, competition, and laissez-faire entrepreneurialism. A nationalist business ethos requires making sacrifices to the group, to the greater good, even if it places limits on an individual's acquisition of wealth. Common sense tells us that black nationalism and black capitalism are incompatible because the black capitalist cannot possibly engage in market principles if he is truly in service of his group.

Asa H. Gordon, an educator at Georgia State Industrial College, understood this tension when he penned an editorial that was rich in religious metaphor to express worldly concerns. The "most potent Salvation In This World Today Is Economic Prosperity," wrote Gordon, and "the proper task of Negro leadership is to lead the Negro into economic power," which was to be achieved collectively. Effective black leadership, he continued, practices "real *sacrificial, courageous, daring true economic cooperation*," and only then could it "lead the race into the Promised Land of Economic Welfare, the only salvation that offers escape from the real Devil of this modern world—poverty." This language, together with the essay's title, "The Modern Moses," drew on an older hermeneutic of black Christianity formed under slavery; only here the theme of escape was placed in a new context and the sacrifice required to part the waters involved paying higher prices for the same goods and services or the same prices for goods and services that were often of lesser quality, in order to effect the greater good.[51]

Sol Johnson, a board member of the Mechanics Savings Bank, echoed the theme of financial sacrifice for group redemption in 1920 when he appealed to his readers to "buy black." "When a Negro . . . buys his groceries at a Negro store; puts his money in a Negro bank; insures with a Negro company; buys his land through a Negro agent; puts up at a Negro hotel; attends a Negro theatre," wrote the *Tribune* editor, "he is paving the way for his own chil-

dren, his own kind and laying the foundation for the freedom which brings within full enjoyment of one's labor and money."[52] Once again racial nationalism collided head-on with free market principles to embrace a corporatist ethos. Here the black consumer was implored to privilege the idea of racial progress over a bargain, always unrealistic in a society governed by markets and especially impractical given the black consumer's frequently dire financial circumstances in the early twentieth century. In the end it was a clash of cultures and an impossible ideal.

Whatever the pitfalls of black capitalism, they did not dash a collective hope that black business would lead all black Savannahians to the Promised Land. Church leaders continued to envision spiritual and material redemption in their Kingdom of God on earth and in heaven. No one expressed this idea more forcefully than Albert Singfield in a speech before the National Negro Business League in 1915. He confirmed the emergence of a new black leadership in Savannah that "knit . . . together the minister, the layman and the businessman." Singfield was, of course, talking about himself—a church deacon, a businessman, and the president of Savannah's chapter of the Negro Business League. His world was a hybrid where private concerns assumed public significance, where there was little distinction between the personal province of faith and the worldly domain of material gain. Savannah's Negro Business League, explained Singfield: preach[es] to the members of the race to strive to buy a coat to wear on earth, as well as to get a long white robe in heaven, make preparation for a pair of shoes to wear on earth as well as for the golden slippers in Paradise—prepare to get a hat to wear on earth as well as to get a starry crown in heaven." For Singfield, Black Christian Nationalism not only fused the sacred and secular, but it prophesized interclass racial progress, which joined the aspirations of the elite and black middle classes with the rest of the population, who, in Singfield's words, may have had "less fame" than some, but "fortunes in muscles and health." These were the "common people," he said. They were "men from the humblest walks of life," yet they are "the rock-bed of our commercial success, the keystone of our commercial stability" and spiritual progress.[53]

An examination of bank advertisements reveals the same interclass ethos and the co-mingling between the earthly and the spiritual. An announcement for the one-year anniversary of the Fidelity Savings Bank details a program for achieving salvation. Rich with biblical references, the bank preached "the gospel of FAITH and TRUST, and MUTUAL INTEREST and HELPFULNESS to our tin-cup-buried-in-the-back-yard bankers," and it promised "to bring them into a state of repentance and action." Repentance, the final stage before spiritual rebirth, was achieved through participation in the material life of

the community. Board members of Fidelity Rev. E. H. Quo, a Baptist minister, and D. D. Murcheson, a deacon at First Bryan Baptist, were agents of this worldly progress and spiritual transformation. Through them the bank pledged "not to forget that other larger aspect of our being and mission" was more important than naked financial ambition; it was "to do unto others as we would that they do unto us" and to "love our neighbors as ourselves." In addition to the Golden Rule, Fidelity summoned up the Gospel of Luke to express a Christology that emphasized equality and promised compassion for those who were despised by the wealthy for being poor. "We shall endeavor," promised the advertisement, "to live as we pray, to the end that Lazarus may approach us as freely as Dives and that Dives may not receive any considerations over and above Lazarus."[54] Bruce Barton, the Christian advertising innovator in the 1920s, could not have written more religiously inspired advertising copy, another example of liminal space producing a universal discourse. Black Christians' vision of material progress was not inspired by tax credits, interest rates, or even profit. It was a spiritual prosperity that the likes of Dives never once noticed in all his earthly, lavish days.

If a flourishing black business community could offer a "fallen" people salvation, as Johnson suggested, and if black business leaders could get black Savannahians to the Promised Land through sacrifice, as Gordon argued, there were others for whom the idea of nation was explicitly interwoven with community at the individual level. In 1925 L. M. Glenn, pastor of First Bryan Baptist and a board member of the Mechanics Savings Bank, preached a sermon whose title underscored his understanding of the connection between individual agency and a collective destiny that was expressed in Black Christian Nationalism: "The failure of individuals and Nations [is] traced to [failure in] the life of religion in business and business in religion." Glenn's civic-mindedness extended beyond the mere expression of belonging and liberation from the degradations of poverty and want. As he himself put it, his life's work was to "create for the ministry a new and safe doctrine," one that "embodied . . . the patriotic combination of accumulated competency and power." Simply put, what was good for the individual was good for the nation.[55]

At least one black leader was concerned about the practical and spiritual implications of this blending of business and Christianity. John Hope, president of Morehouse College and a prominent Baptist layman, worried about the excesses that capitalism (or in this case, business) produced. His concern was that business precepts would contaminate spirituality and church life. He would not have opposed the sentiments expressed by the leaders of Fidelity Bank. Nor would he have dissented from the message of interclass fellow-

ship and collective aspiration delivered by Albert Singfield, or Daniel Simmons's optimistic nose-to-the-grindstone prescription for worldly success. Although Hope would have liked to see a distinction between the communal ethos expressed in black business and the bourgeois individualism that drove profit and modern capitalism, in practice he was not convinced that such a distinction existed. In 1921 and again in 1924 Hope spoke before the National Negro Business League. Both times he warned about the spirit and excesses of capitalism. "What doth it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his soul?" he asked. Acknowledging the relationship between the businessman and the pastor, Hope cautioned his listeners about the culture, the language, and the faith in financial profit penetrating community spirit. Frequently used phrases such as "business proposition," "delivering the goods," "selling," and "putting over," he insisted, revealed attitudes that were undermining the cooperative spirit that had infused black religion and church life since slavery. Competition, he reasoned, was dangerous in that it threatened to displace the moral imperatives of black Christianity. If black businessmen emulated white business practices successfully and penetrated black religion with the principles of individualism and making profit at any cost, they would undermine the mission of Christianity and religion more generally. "There are in fact," said Hope, "even among colored people—a great many good things that we colored people don't realize," things that white people were beginning to imitate.[56]

Although not directly referring to Wannamaker's Bethany Presbyterian, Hope certainly had that kind of church in mind when he reminded his audience that for years black churches were not merely places where people went to pray, marry, and "funeralize" their dead. Black churches provided places where members socialized, listened to music and lectures on just about everything under the sun, and helped themselves and each other; and now some white churches were emulating them. This, insisted Hope, was something that black people needed to hold onto and carry over to other aspects of their lives, including business. "[E]xploitation" and "making money for pleasure's sake" ran counter to the cooperative spirit that had defined African American communities from the beginning. Black businessmen, said Hope, needed to promote "trust," not competition, and community cooperation, not dissension.[57]

It was almost as though Hope were responding word for word to a speech made by Nannie H. Burroughs before the same body several years earlier. In 1915 Burroughs, a leader of the Woman's Convention of the National Baptist Convention, Inc., and founder and principal of the National Baptist Training School for Women and Girls in Washington, D.C., had applauded the very

same principles that Hope warned against. Instead of urging black businessmen to curb competition and individualism, Burroughs's message dwelt on the virtues of efficiency, cleanliness, and industriousness. While she was not suggesting black businesses turn their attention away from communal requirements and nation building, embracing the same language Hope would warn against, she said "you are living in an age of competition and comparison," and in order to succeed, "[y]ou have got to be able to 'deliver the goods,' and if you are not able to 'deliver the goods' you are going to fall, and fall mighty hard."[58] Where Hope warned against the spirit of capitalism and competition and market relations poisoning the ideal of black community, Burroughs insisted that the business ethos that white businessmen honed was well worth emulating. And while Hope extolled the virtues of community spirit in black institutions, Burroughs warned that this spirit might spell the end of business for black Americans:

> You are living and conducting business side by side with the shrewd white man who puts brains and energy into his business, who has reduced business and advertising to a science, who has learned the imperative value of system, order and neatness in the conduct of his store, and who doesn't allow his shop to be decorated with a lot of smokers and loafers that have nothing to do but sit around all day and run all the other trade away. (Applause) They succeed because they require a purchaser to buy whatever he wants and then go on about his business, and Negro business men have got to do the same thing.[59]

This tension between community and competition—or nationalism and capitalism—expressed by Burroughs as a clash between loafers and purchasers was a classic message of uplift. Hope was not suggesting that black entrepreneurs be slovenly or careless in their business transactions; yet he saw danger in any kind of entrepreneurialism that undermined community and congregation.

In 1922 *The Crisis* magazine seemed to be siding with Burroughs in its criticisms of the National Negro Business League and black business more generally: "The leading business men of the race have for years regretted that the growth of the League in membership, in constructive program and in administrative efficiency has not been commensurate with the commercial and financial progress of the race."[60] The NNBL, in other words, like the black-owned shop that Burroughs described, was more a social club than a business; it fostered race pride and racial unity, but not the scientific techniques of modern industry and commerce. The Negro Business League was both a product and reflection of the way black businessmen and religious leaders thought about themselves and their mission. They were nationalist boosters,

a de facto black chamber of commerce, bolstering pride and patriotism in nation and race.

The range of opinion expressed by Hope, Burroughs, and *The Crisis* shows intellectuals struggling over the meaning of Black Christian Nationalism, even as they did not give it that name. They all favored the kind of corporatist development that nationalism expresses, but with divergent opinions over how such development would be achieved. To some extent, Black Christian Nationalism represented a struggle over an ethical and moral expression of community that addressed the needs of the poorest as well as the richest and the exigencies of operating business enterprises in a competitive field. It was not a call for a redistribution of wealth; nor was it a statement against social hierarchy—such as it was in the Baptist denomination—and private property. It did not involve political struggle against the unequal structures of racial or economic power. It existed well within the boundaries of American notions of entrepreneurialism, self-help, and social advancement.

Savannah's harbingers of Black Christian Nationalism shared a utopian ideal that connected spiritual truth, communities of faith, and the world of business. Black Savannahians had rejoiced in freedom together, suffered the indignities and hardships of Jim Crow, and labored together to create a godly community, a black "City upon a Hill" in a sea of hostility and spiritual imperfection. They, too, believed in "brotherly affection," not so different from that which John Winthrop preached in "A Modell of Christian Charity" to his weary fellow voyagers aboard the *Arbella* in 1630 on their way to the Massachusetts Bay Colony. Whether black Savannahians' concern was that the whole world was watching, as their predecessors had been, is beside the point. What is a basis for comparison was how they saw black Savannah; for in a sense they, too, were building a covented community that combined religious conviction and business strivings in their determination to create worldly perfection.

CHAPTER 2

HOLDING THE LINE FOR THE WORD

Black Evangelicals below the Mason-Dixon

When Rev. Cato Priester, pastor of Happy Home Baptist Church, entered the Georgia Infirmary on July 5, 1921, to undergo a series of operations, he took advantage of his new surroundings to preach the Gospel. Before leaving the hospital the preacher had converted for baptism five fellow patients, all of whom experienced regeneration and unity with God. After their rebirths they were welcomed into the Baptist fold. Upon his discharge from the hospital, Rev. Priester returned to the infirmary to organize a church. He licensed a preacher, "Lic. Brooks," whom he had met while convalescing, and left him in charge, "as Paul left Timothy to carry on his work." For the next six months Priester returned to the Georgia Infirmary church on the second Sunday to commune the members of the young congregation. Since that time, according to a statement issued by the Happy Home Baptist Church, many converts were "restored" to their home churches.[1]

By the turn of the twentieth century evangelicalism had become the dominant cultural religious expression in the South. Black Protestantism had expanded into the increasingly stratified urban communities, and evangelical church life mirrored that stratification, albeit in complex and not always obvious ways.[2] Lay and ordained leaders of "mainline" black Baptist churches be-

lieved they bore responsibility for taming the wills and desires of all black Savannahians, especially new arrivals. With the mass migration of black farmers to Savannah in the first decades of the new century, this became a mammoth undertaking. New arrivals typically clustered around the less established churches, preferring the intimacy and informality of the smaller faith communities. Worship styles, moreover, in those churches were more akin to what they were familiar with. Rural migrants carried with them remnants of a folk religion that was grounded at the same time in their country experiences and vestiges of African religious practices that had survived slavery. Mainline Christian leaders kept members of their respective churches in check using extra-church surveillance committees and church discipline hearings. They sought religious dominance over smaller and younger churches by imposing what they regarded as a more respectable worship style, a more uniform doctrine, and a "high church" culture among all worshippers. Ministers' unions, religious revivals, and interchurch fellowship were some of the quotidian ways Christian leaders exerted control. When they perceived a deepening threat to their effective dominance, black ministers were known to take their case to the local criminal justice system.

Rural migration to Savannah and other cities in Georgia concerned many black leaders in the 1920s. To some, it seemed as though society was losing its moorings: whole families of black farmers, mainly day workers but also sharecroppers and tenants, abandoned impoverished communities and set out for the nearest city. Tens of thousands of impoverished people, finding it increasingly difficult to survive, upped and left where they had been living in the countryside. The South had not seen movement like this since the end of slavery. In 1890 the Census Bureau announced that the American Frontier no longer existed, and three decades later the numbers showed that for the first time a majority of the nation's people (51.4 percent) resided in cities. As revealing as statistics are, often they tell only part of the story. The historian Edward Ayers wrote about the effects of absentee landownership on rural parts of the South at the turn of the century. More and more white landowners were joining the professional classes as bankers, lawyers, and politicians, and for such men it was fashionable to reside in the city and own a plantation in the countryside. As these owners turned land over to tenants for cash rent, their priorities changed. Upkeep of the land and farms declined, contributing to rural instability. A precipitous drop in commodity prices after 1920, land exploitation, and the boll weevil made many areas decidedly inhospitable to human habitation, black or white. Traveling through a section of the region where the majority of the farms had been turned over to tenants, a minister from the North wrote, "as soon as one gets away from the towns and ven-

tures himself into the barren wastes of the unredeemed country about, the wretchedness is pathetic and the poverty colossal."[3]

No matter how forsaken and unwelcoming some parts of the rural South were, black leaders were united in their efforts to dissuade country folk from abandoning those areas for the cities. In 1922 Benjamin F. Hubert, president of Georgia State Industrial College, a black land grant college just outside Savannah in Thunderbolt, argued for a vigorous "back to the farm" program in an article he penned for the Baptist *Home Mission Review*. Hubert called on Georgia's "ministers of the gospel to preach and emphasize farm . . . ownership as one of the fundamental methods of [creating] a stable society." Under more favorable circumstances, Hubert may have had a point; a class of Jeffersonian independent black producers with roots in their rural communities would have seemed steady and secure, especially by comparison with the chaos that appeared to be engulfing the cities. But the circumstances were far from favorable for black landownership, especially in the lower South.[4]

Despite his unrealistic musings about the possibilities for black farmers in the New South, Hubert's concerns about the effects of the rearrangement of southern black humanity were shared by others. Rev. D. D. Crawford, corresponding secretary of Georgia's black General Missionary Baptist Association, wrote a letter to Georgia's Governor Thomas W. Hardwick in 1922 to convince him to gather "the best White and Colored citizens" of the state to "confer on the ways and means of keeping these people on the farms and inducing others" who had moved to the cities to return to the countryside. "The Colored people are leaving the rural sections of our state so rapidly," wrote Crawford, that the "health and morals of these people" in the cities were in decline. In an editorial in the state's black Baptist newspaper a few years later he added, the "bright lights, places of amusement, good houses, good schools, protection from violence, transportation conveniences, ready cash for services rendered, social contact," were "appealing to human instinct and alluring to human nature." For "spiritual welfare" if nothing else, Crawford implored ministers to convince black farmers to abandon their urban dreams.[5]

Notwithstanding these admonitions, and others like them, citified distant aunts and long-lost cousins twice and thrice removed, half siblings and nieces and nephews, became magnets for relatives from the countryside who coursed into the cities in search of opportunity. Near-destitute croppers and renters, cotton pickers, and river drudgers kept up a steady and seemingly endless migration. For many it was a matter of economic survival; while for others, like Frank Chisholm, who arrived in Savannah in 1915 as a wide-eyed eighteen-year-old from Beaufort County, South Carolina, it was also to

search for the excitement that seemed possible in the anonymity of city life. Years later Chisholm recalled his desire to escape the monotonous drudgery of "sun to sun" day labor, where it was "too hot for even the animals to work." Chisholm had been a rock digger on the same cotton farm his father worked on as a day laborer. During his first years in Savannah he stayed with a distant aunt and worked in a fertilizer factory. Chisholm would eventually settle down to a life of virtue with considerable moral standing as a deacon at First African Baptist, and Crawford and others would continue to issue warnings about the overcrowding in the cities that led to "too many consumers and not enough producers," pervasive "demoralization," "licentious" behavior, and a general "disregard for sacred and better things."[6]

As agents of progress and civilization for the spiritually and morally impoverished black majority, Savannah's black ministers convened in early spring 1922 to launch a citywide revival, a "crusade against sin." Twenty-four mainline black Baptist ministers representing the same number of churches united under the auspices of the Baptist Ministers Alliance and launched a month of revival services. While the individual churches served congregations of varying classes and status, this religious campaign was given a degree of coherency under the direction of T. J. Goodall of First African. The revival was an opportunity for Baptists to renew their faith claims and to introduce the ways of God to prospective converts. It was directed as much toward the middle classes who were respectably churched as it was to those who attended marginal storefront churches—and to those with no church affiliation at all. Participating ministers included the most educated as well as those who lacked any formal theological or college training. All ascribed to dominant precepts of Baptist theological and ritual orthodoxy. The crusade against sin included daily and evening meetings, "[o]ne week on the west side and one week on the east side," and the ministers took turns before the pulpit.[7]

For the already initiated, Protestant evangelical revivals often were preceded by a prolonged period of quiet prayer service in the various participating churches. Church members engaged in spiritual introspection to strengthen their individual bonds with Jesus Christ and to deepen their connections with other members of their respective faith communities. In the days before a revival at Second Baptist, for instance, members discussed "Faith" during an evening prayer meeting, and on another night they held a "covenant meeting" to renew their "further determination and hope in Christ." In a similar vein, members of Beth Eden Baptist heard no preaching the Sunday before their week-long revival began but instead held a "very spiritual prayer service." Afterward twenty-two believers responded to Pastor N. M. Clarke's call for "volunteer workers to go out Sunday by twos and look

up the unsaved." Second Baptist employed a similar method in "putting over a great program in kingdom building." Its members went out to conduct "house to house prayer meetings" a week before the revival, and the church reported in the *Tribune* that it was "awakened as never before."[8]

To what extent the smallest and most marginal black Baptist churches—those that were not represented in the 1922 citywide revival—expressed an oppositional or even alternative culture to dominant mainline theology and liturgy is difficult to say. What is clear, however, is that services held in storefront churches represented at least part of what middle-class Christians were struggling against. Sol Johnson, an active member of the elite First Congregationalist Church and the editor of the black weekly *Savannah Tribune*, provided ample evidence of middle-class black Christians' biases in his description of a storefront church scene: "The other Sunday night we passed by an old dilapidated shack and heard some familiar ranting which we knew was that of a jack-leg preacher. We peeped in and found that the man had made an improvised altar of soap boxes and was pretending to be expounding the gospel to a congregation of six persons." To Johnson the whole scene was little more than a ruse. This was not a real church, and there was no preacher. "There are many other such Baptist (?) churches in our midst," he continued. "We shudder to think of the woeful lack of proper educational qualifications which scores of these men possess." It is "a matter of the blind leading the blind." Some years later, in the same pages, Johnson wrote approvingly about a revival service he attended at the middle-class Second Baptist Church. Making a distinction between Second Baptist and some of the "old time" churches that fired up the feelings and not the heart, Johnson's description of Second Baptist conveyed his penchant for faith combined with reason and order: "The entire service had that dignity impelled by the Spirit that was truly present," he wrote. The music was provided by a "chorus of well blended voices"—"not the rasping kind, but those full of melody with an appeal that quickened the soul and directed the thought to the sermon which was unfolded in such a manner as to convince the most simple, the hardest of sinners, and make stronger every believer."[9] Salvation, Johnson seemed to be saying, was a logical choice, not an emotional state of being.

Without question, mainline leaders of Savannah's black Christian faith community shared an elite bias; but as the 1922 revival shows, their intention was not to exclude those who were not members, but to enlarge their sphere of influence. The spirit of the countryside arrived with unlettered—not to mention uncouth—men and women; and it was the job of Savannah's ministers to discipline them and make them presentable and more urbane. They sought to uplift the masses of poor and working-class black people,

to tame their desires into spiritual submission. To that end, in 1924 Rev. N. M. Clarke suggested that the Baptist denomination limit the number of churches and preachers in the city, which would force all Baptists into the mainline churches. Clarke estimated that in Savannah there were approximately 75 black Baptist churches—51 more than those that had participated in the city-wide revival two years earlier, and 23 more than were listed in the *City Directory*—and more than 225 "expounders of the gospel of Jesus Christ." This was too many to supervise in proper religious decorum. These churches, he wrote, "can have no real purpose for existing and should be closed up," for they lacked "efficiency," and perhaps more importantly, echoing Johnson, Clarke insisted that the preachers were not "intellectually fit to preach the word of God." Clarke's call for the elimination of storefront churches did not go into detail. He did not propose how exactly that would come about in a denomination that had long eschewed centralization and hierarchy. Still, in a subsequent editorial five years later, Clarke deployed a Social Darwinist argument when he wrote that only the largest churches deserved to endure. Consolidation would strengthen the denomination and simplify the problem of doctrinal regulation and control. If the weakest of the churches were naturally eliminated, reasoned Clarke, " 'the survival of the fittest' will be the rule."[10]

Such hostility toward marginal churches, propelled by a desire to include and restrain, reflected a failure to appreciate the social meaning of the smaller churches in members' lives. One *Tribune* reader, writing from Chicago, responded to a similarly elite opinion that disparaged marginal church services, this one penned by Rev. E. G. Thomas. The letter writer, J. B. Chauncey, suggested that those who advocated the closure of storefront churches were overzealous and that their commitment to theological orthodoxy blinded them to what those churches offered. "There is a Baptist church on a certain street in Yamacraw," he wrote, "where the minister and his congregation is well matched. They all believe devoutly in voodooism and such and they are happy in the companionship in one another. No minister of education and refinement could reach this people as their present pastor is doing." Mainline black Christian views on religious respectability, according to Chauncey, were concepts so alien to the members of storefront churches that they would most likely do more to alienate than educate. "The minister should not be too far above his flock in literary attainments, for if he is he would find it difficult indeed to interest his church in his sermons."[11] While the letter writer from Chicago did not disagree in principle with the aspirations of Savannah's black Christian leadership, he believed that it was not the uneducated exhorter or preacher of the gospel who was holding black people back, but the educated

minister himself who failed to understand the social meaning of ritual and community in the marginal churches.

The problem of doctrinal control and theological orthodoxy became even more pronounced in 1926 when Bishop C. M. Grace, the charismatic apostolic preacher, arrived in Savannah. A year earlier when Grace began holding tent meetings up and down the eastern seaboard, from Tampa to Buffalo, he found his greatest support in Georgia and the Carolinas. Charles Manuel "Daddy Grace," as his followers referred to him, arrived in Savannah by way of New Bedford, Massachusetts, a Portuguese immigrant community. Although Grace was an enigma—self-invented several times over—most likely he was born Marcelino Manoel de Graca in 1881 in Brava, in the archipelago of the Cape Verde Islands, then a Portuguese territory off the coast of West Africa. De Graca came to the United States while in his early twenties, changed his name to Charles M. Grace, and worked at various odd jobs before beginning his career in 1924 as a holiness preacher. He established his first United House of Prayer for All People on the Rock of the Apostolic Faith, in Massachusetts, and crowned himself a bishop. Grace and his followers referred to their places of worship not as churches but as "Houses of Prayer," based on Isaiah 56:7 ("These I will bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer; their burnt offerings will be accepted on my altar; for my house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples"). The Houses of Prayer were almost always built in the poorest section of the city, and though they were open to all regardless of color or even creed, in the first decade of his ministry the vast majority of his followers were poor black people. According to the anthropologist Arthur Huff Fauset, who interviewed the preacher in the early 1940s, although Grace was "[b]ronze of color," he did not "admit to being a Negro"; yet he thought of himself as a leader of black people.[12]

When notices of the preacher's impending arrival appeared as both broadsides and paid advertisements in the *Savannah Tribune*, the most orthodox of the black Baptists, as well as other established denominations (including the Seventh-day Adventists), sensed a threat to the sacred order—not to mention their religious authority—and began to organize against him. From a theological point of view, it is not difficult to see why. One announcement claimed that the Bishop came from "the Holy City of Jerusalem," and that he had traveled "8,000 miles on the water to tell us that Jesus is not dead but He is risen . . . and lives forevermore, and He still gives sight to the blind, speech to the dumb, hearing to the deaf." Jesus, continued the notice, "is still causing the lame to walk and healing all manner of diseases. And if you do not believe come out to the Tent . . . and bring anyone that you know is blind, deaf or

dumb, cripple or afflicted in any way and be convinced that Jesus is not a fake. Bishop Grace anoints with oil and prays the prayers of faith and the Lord raise them up."[13] While Grace never actually claimed to be Jesus in so many words, he never dissuaded his followers from insisting to others that he occupied a station alongside the Trinity. In fact, Grace's followers appeared to worship not God—who in this instance appeared to be all but forgotten—but the Bishop himself. According to Fauset, Grace instructed his devotees to "Never mind about God. Salvation is by Grace only . . . Grace has given God a vacation . . . If you sin against God, Grace can save you, but if you sin against Grace God cannot save you."[14]

Soon after his arrival in Savannah, Grace's attendants pitched a massive tent at Thirty-third and Burroughs, near Ogeechee Road on the far west side of the city. From there Grace preached for three weeks, afternoon and evening, and sometimes far into the night. Word spread quickly throughout the city of this charismatic faith healer, and before long his tent could barely contain the surging crowds. Some, no doubt, had little more than voyeuristic interest in Grace and his services, while others attended his services for more practical reasons. One life-long member of Second Baptist recalled going to one of Grace's tent services after school with a neighbor when she was a child. The neighbor was "on a crutch," she said, and the child went with him "to see him healed." When she returned home from school later than usual her mother—also a member of Second Baptist—demanded to know where her daughter had been. Once told, the girl's mother asked whether Grace had healed the neighbor. Although the story of the mainline churches' efforts to regulate their members' behavior is taken up in a later chapter, suffice it to say here that Second Baptist led the pack in its insistence on theological orthodoxy. Still, the power of discipline and punishment for doctrinal transgression could not regulate thought or belief: the girl's mother was not willing to ally herself completely with scientific reason and religious orthodoxy and rule out the possibility that Grace could perform miracles. (According to the woman's recollection, the neighbor dropped the crutch.)[15]

Disciplined religious orthodoxy was a paramount requirement for membership in the brotherhood of Baptist ministers. Such a doctrinal threat was Grace that members of the city's black Baptist Ministers Union organized a special "investigative committee" whose job was to police ministers and bring them to "trial" for attending Grace's services. According to the Union, merely attending Grace's services for whatever reason was tantamount to placing oneself "in the hands of the Bishop [and] being annointed [*sic*] to the party of his faith." Mainline ministers demanded absolute fidelity, and transgressors served as examples to others who were tempted to go astray. In

1926 several black Baptist ministers were tried before a "jury of their peers" before being sent on their way with firm instructions "to affiliate in none of the Baptist pulpits."[16] The Ministers Union's harsh language and merciless actions reveal a covetous regard for their faith while at the same time suggesting a perception of a faith under attack. The ministers would go to great lengths to gain a measure of mastery over their changing world.

The eruption of the cultural battles that pitted Baptists against Baptists was over the meaning of religious belief and the way Christianity ought to be practiced. But there was a deeper meaning to the conflict. E. P. Thompson famously wrote about another religious battle, this one between competing Methodists in early nineteenth-century England when orthodox Wesleyans (who disowned the Luddites) fought the Primitive Methodists because their camp meetings were so disorderly they feared the meetings might lead to political revolt (which they ultimately did). Savannah's middle-class mainline Baptists who opposed Grace—and the unruly religious practices that new arrivals brought with them from the countryside—were not attempting to forge a docile proletarian class, but some of the habits they were attempting to instill in the broader population, including temperate behavior and self-discipline, were conducive to participating successfully in bourgeois society. Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham understood the mainline Baptists' stance on Christian orthodoxy—and "manners and morals"—as promoting a "politics of respectability" that would ultimately change white racists' perceptions about black peoples' inferiority.[17] In a sense the mainline Christians were fighting a battle against a version of the Christianity their ancestors had forged during slavery and that combined orthodox and "pagan" elements: monotheism and spirit worship, and faith and superstition. It comes as no surprise that the burgeoning middle class that was attempting to establish itself in the dying days of an *ancien régime* looked down on this version of Christianity.

Another way to explore the meaning of the relationships between the black middle classes and the unrefined rural working classes during this period takes as a starting point the formation of a middle class in the context of a culture of nationalism that evolved as a response to racial exclusion. The ministers and their supporters who were most offended by Grace were in a sense agents of modernity for black Savannah: they sought to smooth over the rough edges of rural cultural practices and ultimately replace them with an expansive universalism. As a bourgeoning middle class, they served many of the same functions as any bourgeois class. The political philosopher Iris Marion Young argues that bourgeois class formation involves efforts to rationalize public space by creating normative boundaries. This was a claim

to universalism, an impartiality that transcends particular interests. Tracing modern political theory from the Republican philosophes, Young identifies the creation of a standardized dichotomy between reason and desire. "The civil public," she writes, "expresses the universal and impartial point of view of reason, standing opposed to and expelling desire [and] sentiment."[18] Mainline black Christian leaders' responses to Grace were, in effect, a rising bourgeoisie attempting to regulate vernacular and design common spaces through exclusionary practices.

Grace's claim to be an apostle equal to Jesus was a perversion of the religious—and, by extension, secular—social order, and it enraged mainline black clergymen so much that they appealed to local authorities to shut down his operation. While entering his tent one evening to conduct a meeting, the bishop, along with his wife, was arrested and taken to the county courthouse where he was charged with "criminal libel." Savannah had become Grace's Gethsemane. The couple was released on bond late that same evening, and when Grace returned to the tent he "held his forces together until long after mid-night." The preacher himself could not have organized a better publicity campaign for himself. To be apprehended at this early stage of his ministerial career inspired resolute support from his disciples and piqued the interest of many others. Over the following decades Grace would become adept at weathering numerous legal battles up and down the eastern seaboard, but it was in Savannah where he began to cultivate an air of invincibility. After the authorities released Grace, the ministers filed a second lawsuit, this one charging him with disorderly conduct and fraud; but those charges failed to stick as well, hardly surprising, since secular authorities in the modern world are ill-equipped to take sides in battles over religious meaning, a point that underscores the irony of this whole affair.[19] There was a traditional and premodern, almost medieval, element in the black ministers' otherwise modernist efforts to rationalize public space. As agents of modernity, elite ministers had blurred the distinctions between sacred and secular authority in their attempts to remove religious heterodoxy from the public realm.

Despite the formidable opposition, Bishop Grace returned to Savannah every September to attract new adherents and to renew the faith of old ones. By the fall of 1928 he had built a House of Prayer on Bismark Street, several blocks from his first tent meeting two years earlier.[20] On the first Sunday of September he led about a thousand followers, including 307 "baptismal converts," in a procession several city blocks long, "the likes of which have never been seen in this city," wrote the *Tribune*. The cortege "marched through thousands of spectators who had banked themselves around the place of baptism to witness the unusual ceremony." The reporter was at the same

time captivated by the dazzling display and repulsed by the form of the service:

> [T]he bishop was the central figure as he stood on the brink of the pool and led his converts to his six disciples in the water, who emersed [*sic*] them three at a time after the bishop had invoked the divine blessing on them.
>
> The baptism consumed about two hours, and before the first of the converts were led into water they were formed into a semi-circle around the bishop and pictures taken of the imposing spectacle. Then the white robed choir started a shout led by the piano, cornet and tamborine [*sic*] and such weird music had never before been heard hereabouts at such a service. The first hymn seemed only to fire the feelings of the singers and by the time the hymn had started scores of the adherents were shouting and many others were talking in unknown tongues. Then the bishop called for silence, and after delivering a short sermon the baptismal ceremonies were begun. . . . [B]oth men and women were garbed in white robes and wearing the characteristic white headgear of their faith. Their dress made the scene imposing and spectacular. Some of the older converts were scarcely able to withstand the excitement of the moment and had to be carefully assisted from the pool. However, the ceremony was carried out with incredible dispatch and when the last of the candidates had been pulled from the water the choir sent forth its final weird chant in which the assemblage took up the strains and then the benediction was pronounced by the bishop.[21]

The sight of a thousand souls swathed in white in preparation for baptism was remarkable, and the *Tribune* was duly stirred, however disdainfully. From the "first hymn" that only "fire[d] the feelings" (and did not engage the mind), it puffed, Grace moved well beyond the pale of middle-class respectability. The preacher and his followers breached the line between the rational and the emotional, throwing themselves into a religious fervor that violated all decorum. Public display of religious heat—in this case, shouting and speaking in "unknown tongues"—was strictly verboten in modern civilized society. Any demonstration of passion was a private affair and not meant to seep into the public sphere. Even after building his House of Prayer, Grace continued to perform the rite of baptism outside his church, in full public view. He built a baptismal pool, not on the church grounds, but several blocks from it, so that his ceremonial marches would snake through the neighborhood as they wound their way to the water.

For more than a century there had been little to separate the public from the private religious experience and the sacred from the secular in ritual practice in all black Baptist churches, no matter what their status. All the churches

held river and canal baptisms in "living waters" as with Jesus, partly out of necessity, and partly in accordance with biblical tradition. At Saint John Baptist, well into the twentieth century, "[t]he old-time carriages would take the crowds to West Broad and Bryan streets and the pastor would lead the candidates and crowds to the canal." As late as 1920, even though First African had modernized its facilities with a pool inside its sanctuary, candidates for baptism lined up outside the church, in full view of the public, preserving the processional aspect of the ritual, although the baptism itself took place behind closed doors. "Everybody knew when you were going to be baptized," recalled Deacon Frank Chisholm, who was baptized that year, "because they could see you from the street." One member of Second Baptist recalled her baptism in the Ogeechee Canal in 1926 when she was fourteen, shortly before that church confined its baptisms to its sanctuary (her greatest concern at the time was the presence of snakes). Many of the more marginal churches carried out this rite publicly for at least ten years after the mainline faith communities had sequestered ritual life behind church doors. In 1930 members of Emmanuel Baptist, whose fledgling faith community was on the western border of Savannah, heard "some interesting points brought us by the pastor at 11 o'clock" before "march[ing] down to the [Savannah River] bank in Yamacraw to the baptism." In 1935 churches were holding river baptisms so frequently that Savannah's Department of Health recommended they be "forbidden in the Savannah River and in the canals of Savannah and Chatham County, since these places are too dirty with human refuse for such use." The increase in typhoid fever, read a report, afflicted mostly African Americans who had been baptized in dirty water. Three years later, Brampton Baptist Church, located far from the center of town, on Augusta Road, "near Zealey's store," reported that it was raising money to build a baptismal pool.[22] Like any social transformation, this one was uneven, and the decision to sequester the rite in each church involved a series of criteria that hinged on financial ability, health concerns, status, and doctrine. Nonetheless, if Grace had answered each of these in turn, his choice in 1928 to install his baptismal pool outdoors would have seemed to mainline Christian leaders as an intentional defiance of what had recently become normative bourgeois behavior.

For some, attending Grace's services nurtured an almost prurient curiosity. But for many others, attendance served a less vicarious purpose. There may have been some degree of visceral familiarity with Grace's services for new arrivals to the city. Sermonizing, for one thing, differed dramatically in a country church. This is not surprising since literacy rates and access to formal education, which were significantly higher in the city, corresponded to different sets of expectations. Country preachers were often no more educated than

those who gathered to hear them preach. While formal theological training that culminated in an advanced degree for black clergy was still more the exception than the rule, those who pastored Savannah's mainline churches usually had received some formal instruction. Consequently, pastors placed a great deal of emphasis on the sermon, and congregants likewise expected to listen to a well-explicated homily when they attended church. If the few extant sermons written and delivered by L. M. Glenn of First Bryan and E. O. S. Cleveland of Saint John are anything to go by, black Protestant sermons revealed a preference for logical exposition and a degree of erudition that would have made little sense to the completely uneducated.[23]

To be sure, Grace's services were not identical to a country Baptist church service, but there would have been some emotive similarities. Grace, like country preachers, did not incorporate prayer books or hymn books. The liturgical experience in Grace's tent did not "direct the thought to the sermon," as Sol Johnson suggested a service ought, but awakened the passions to the Holy Spirit. Benjamin Mays, the formidable president of Morehouse College beginning in 1940, was born and raised in rural South Carolina ten miles from the town of Ninety-Six, in Greenwood County. He recalled his minister who preached every second Sunday at Old Mount Zion Baptist, his boyhood church. Rev. James F. Marshall "was hardly more than a fifth grade scholar," wrote Mays in his memoir, *Born to Rebel*, "but he knew the Scriptures, at least so far as knowing where certain passages were to be found." Hence, the "intellectual content of his sermons was not nearly as important as the emotional appeal." In the 1930s, 76 percent of the nation's black churches were located in rural counties. Mays concluded in a study of rural churches in that decade that country preaching "runs along the lines of the magical and otherworldliness."[24] Grace's claims to be a faith healer roughly correlates with country worshippers' beliefs in the supernatural.

The point is not so much that Grace's services and rural black church services were more emotional than middle-class Christian services. All believers surely undergo deep emotional experiences in their worship rituals. William James, in his now-famous century-old study of religion, wrote that faith of any kind involves an emotional and psychological surrender of the individual to divine will. The foundation of religious life, no matter what denomination or doctrine an individual ascribes to, is more experiential than philosophical. The conversion narratives of Saint Paul the Apostle, Saint Augustine, Martin Luther, and Jonathan Edwards demonstrate so much more than behavioral change or an adherence to a new theology; each details a change of heart and soul, a transformation in consciousness and a radical reorientation of temperament.[25] Thus emotionalism itself was not the issue; the issue was

the role emotionalism played in Grace's services. It was also intellectual accessibility of church ritual to those from the countryside. The "ring shout," for example, which has been traced to slave religion with roots in African ancestor and spirit worship, incorporated religious dancing and shouting, and a version of it was still prevalent in rural black churches. Once again, writing about his childhood preacher, Mays recalled that if Marshall "did not moan a bit and make the people shout, his congregation felt he had not preached well." More importantly, they would have felt that the Holy Spirit had not worked properly. While musicologists have relegated the ring shout to the Sea Islands off the coast of Georgia and South Carolina, where Africanisms were strongest, there is evidence that the ring shout had migrated to other parts of the South as well. Daniel Alexander Payne, the sixth bishop of the A.M.E. Church, described having encountered a worship service that incorporated the shout in the 1890s. Like middle-class Christians in Savannah, he was disdainful: "After the sermon they formed a ring, and with coats off sung, clapped their hands and stamped their feet in a most ridiculous and heathenish way." Payne was so offended that he took "their leader by the arm" and "requested him to desist and to sit down and sing in a rational manner."[26]

Another observer, writing more dispassionately about "Negro primitive Baptists" in rural Tennessee in 1928, described religious dancing that would have had some emotive similarities with the ring shout and with Grace's services:

> Immediately following the prayer another hymn is sung. Usually by this time—depending on the "rousement" of the prayer—there is much excitement and "shouting." The spirit is moving. As it "moves upon the main altar of the heart," the individual affected behaves according to temperament. This behavior may consist of leaping from bench to bench, jumping up and down in one's tracks, screaming, clapping the hands, crying, or any number of other movements with various contortions of the body. Often fellow members are victims of none too friendly blows from the hand of the "shouter." No one is supposed to take offense, however, for it is not the individual but "the spirit which worketh all things."[27]

The following description of one of Grace's services bears a remarkable similarity: "Above the brass instruments the steady throb of the drum can be heard. Voices are raised in accompaniment, feet stamp, shoulders sway, hands clap. . . . The pulsating rhythm of the instruments increases in tempo, men leap[ing] high into the air, gesticulating and babbling, faster and faster he whirls, until he too falls from utter exhaustion."[28] In each case, when the Holy Spirit appeared it possessed the whole body, causing it to leap about

and vocalize. The observer in Tennessee identified the spirit moving about as the "cause" of the shouting and dancing while the eyewitness to Grace's service, ever the outsider, saw only the physical movement.

Grace's incorporation of cornets, trombones, and other brass instruments as well as drums would have been a new, although not unwelcome, experience for rural migrants who were not burdened with constrictive notions of religious orthodoxy. But for black mainline Christians in Savannah, this provided additional evidence of a desecrated hallowed service. Brass instruments would have been suspect even in a secular setting, for they were the instruments of jazz, a musical form that was dubious both for its social context and modality. Leaders were outspoken in their opposition to jazz music because in their minds it led to secular fervor that—just like sacred displays of passion—did not belong in civilized society. Rev. E. G. Thomas, of First African, was resolved on this point when he wrote in 1925: "The rag and tag of jazz lull the conscience to sleep: then the dance breeds familiarity, destroys modesty, stimulates the passions, and eccentuates [*sic*] the sex feeling, dissipating the whole moral structure; and lust runs riot." All of this, continued Thomas, led to divorce and the "Delicatessen Wife" who "is too familiar with too many different men." The minister even denounced "the presentation of the Old Virginia Reel" on a program at his son's public school and vowed to continue to "cry aloud against" this kind of "sin and all uncleanliness." Not long after Thomas delivered a "special sermon" called "Jazz Mania and Jazz Maniac."[29]

Other mainline orthodox leaders weighed in on this bane of civilization, including Rev. S. D. Ross of Second Baptist whose sermon one Sunday morning was entitled "Why I Stopped the Dance." T. J. Goodall delivered a "clarion call" to the people of Savannah on "the drinking habit" and the "notorious jazz entertainments" that "are lowering the standard of the race."[30] In his appeal for "racial standards," Goodall was embracing an aesthetic that privileged a punctilious form over function, the polar opposite of popular taste that "ordinary" people appreciated for animating passions and feelings that are part of everyday existence.

Elite leaders have always understood cultural preference as markers of respectability, which explains why black Baptist ministers and other members of Savannah's black middle class got so worked up about who was listening to what kind of music. Still, it would be an oversimplification to suggest that they were merely conforming to white middle-class tastes. While mainline black Protestant church services incorporated hymns, they also included slave songs. In 1921 the National Baptist Convention, Inc.—the leading national organization of black Baptists—issued its first songbook, *Gospel Pearls*, pulling together several musical traditions, including standard hymns com-

posed by people like Charles Wesley, white "tabernacle" or evangelical gospel songs written by composers associated with prominent white evangelists, including Dwight L. Moody and Billy Sunday, and the "spirituals" and "jubilees" derived from slave music. Writing several years later in an editorial in his newspaper on "Negro spirituals," Sol Johnson insisted that they "should not be polluted by foolish mannerisms and jazzy strains. Let's keep them pure," he added, meaning unadorned and unembellished with syncopated rhythms that had come to be associated with that diabolical musical form, "jass." The Negro spiritual, explained Johnson, represented "the outpouring of a people whose hearts were heavy and whose souls were sadly weighed down." Blue notes and rhythmic elisions were making the slave songs "common and unwelcomed."[31]

Johnson's appreciation of Negro spirituals was a product of history that was reproduced by education. His awareness of the historical social conditions under which slaves produced the songs served as a sort of decoding operation, allowing him to be moved by their simple and irreducible form. Johnson, and other members of Savannah's black elite, shared a fervent dislike of jazz, not long out of Storyville, because to their ears it was raucous and vulgar and required a more facile engagement than the slave song. Around World War II, jazz would evolve into a chamber music that demanded serious listening—incorporating complex polyrhythms, dissonant harmonies, new tone colors, and irregular phrasing—and come to be a highbrow art form that was appreciated by educated elites of many nationalities. But in the 1920s it was music to dance to. Patrons frequented clubs that played this new music in search of lively "hot" tunes and the slow "gut bucket" kind. Up in Harlem in New York City, they invented one "Negro dance" after another, each one making its way down to Savannah—the lindy, black bottom, shimmy, truckin', snake hips, Susie Q. Even the names of these new moves suggested images of bodies surrendering involuntarily to the physical sensations inspired by the music. The whole notion of surrender implies that which is easy and, by extension, simple and shameful, suggesting public displays of sexual behavior. Middle-class and elite black Christians could not help but view jazz music as blasphemous if for no other reason than overtly inspiring a base surrender to desire, the opposite of sublimation, and other products of learning.[32]

If jazz remained off-limits to the black elite—and a safe distance from their sacred realm—the gospel blues was another story. Gospel was a genre that blended three traditions: the Anglo-European sacred hymns of the high church, the shaped-note songs associated with southern white folk religion, and sacred spirituals and blues tunes that came from black folk religion. Resistance to this new musical form that brought together disparate modes

from various places underscores the ministers' primary concern—relations between the classes of black churchgoers. Just as black urban ministers and lay leaders were attempting to restrain folk religion that was making inroads from the countryside, musical directors of mainline black urban churches struggled hard to resist the encroachments of the gospel blues, still in its infancy in the 1920s. When Savannah's black Protestant elite weighed in on this new musical form, they sensed the stale predictability of their stance. The *Savannah Tribune* insisted, "We have not joined the purity squad" nor have we "become members of any religious blue law cult." Nonetheless, the editorial continued, "we want to throw our weak protest along with the thousands of others that have been elicited in certain trends" of music. Echoing nearly word for word their own expressed sentiments about the slave songs, the commentary asserted that while some gospel blues "are an artistic type to be highly appreciated," for they "depict deep suffering, deep melancholy, weariness over the contemplation of . . . gripping tragedy," there was the other kind that "has its foundation in wanton abandon," and it must be resisted. "Its music is a veritable symphony of sensuousness. It croons, and sobs, and pleads, and moans."[33] This was a different expression of the now familiar dichotomy between that which appeals to the heart and that which appeals to the mind. The gospel blues that was influenced by Storyville jazz, like country preaching, appealed to the immediate senses, encouraging both emotional and physical surrender, while true art including the slave spiritual and high church sacred hymns required cognitive awareness, reasoning, intuition, and knowledge as part of the process of appreciation. This gospel blues, like the slave song, in the minds of the educated black middle classes became like museum pieces, aesthetics objectified.

The evangelical upsurge that began with George Whitefield several centuries earlier, in a sense, had come full circle. While Whitefield's message appealed to poor black (and white) southerners in the eighteenth century by offering a powerful substitute for the cerebral moralism that permeated religious practices, now middle-class and elite black Christians were seeking to restrain religious fervor.[34] Their endeavors to facilitate claims to an expansive universalism that involved rejecting profane music, insistence on refinement in worship, and the sequestering of emotion from the public realm dovetailed with the theological conservatism that was a critical part of southern black Christians' inheritance.

Modern Protestantism expresses a doctrine of individualism and operates like a balancing act between the individual and the faith communities as believers forge unmediated personal relationships with God. Evangelical Protes-

tantism has always been profoundly shaped by its popular character: believers carry out their religious duty of energetically spreading the Gospel. Evangelical Christians of various theological leanings have always agreed on the importance of individual salvation prior to church membership, implying a reconciliation between the frequently opposing views of the individual and the larger social order that exists beyond the church walls. To Southern black Christians, understanding their relationship to this larger world was tricky. In a sense, they sought to maintain equilibrium between the individual and *two* societies, one black and the other white. The doctrine of individual salvation alone was inadequate to addressing the sins of society when it was society itself that was fallen from grace.

Still, southern black Baptists' Christian inheritance did not dissolve into thin air: they continued to formally acknowledge original sin. Nowhere was the theological principle of individualism expressed more clearly by a black Baptist in Savannah than when Rev. N. M. Clarke declared in 1923 that the "Colored Baptists are Calvinistic in doctrine." This idea, further elaborated on in the Constitution of a local Baptist association four years later, could have been made by any Protestant Christian organization in the modern world. All members, it stated, believed in "human depravity" as it flowed directly from "the fall of Adam and the imputation of his sins to his posterity in the corruption of human nature, and to the impotency of man to recover himself from his lost estate." Anyone would be hard-pressed to distinguish these statements made by black Baptists from members of the Southern Baptist Convention that dominated much of the white South. Notwithstanding these statements affirming original sin and many others that recognized the solitude of the corrupted individual, black southern Christians could not help but be hesitant about such matters.[35]

Like believers of every faith, black Baptists in the South interpreted religious creed in ways that flowed from their own history, including slavery, the long history of poverty, state-sanctioned violence, and the rise of Jim Crow long after emancipation. Their collective experiences in the era of slavery and freedom turned out to be poor training grounds for the belief in original sin. Southern black Baptists articulated a social gospel that related to this ambivalence. In 1918 Baptist minister R. J. Jackson declared, "The stringent written and unwritten laws, made solely for the Negroes of this country, is [*sic*] an affront to God, an insult to Christianity." That same year, Rev. R. R. Wright elaborated on this idea in an article about the social and political aims of Christianity. The task of black Christianity, he wrote, "is to interpret the Negro into the democracy of this nation and into the Christianity of America." This was a social gospel that far from holding black southerners

responsible for their own suffering had the noble goal of saving America from the sins of inequality and discrimination. "At present," continued Wright, "we are brothers-in-law in Christ, but not brothers in fact and practice."[36] Wright's understanding of Christianity lay claim to a social communalism and a worldliness that was not always compatible with the radical individualism that is the cornerstone of the doctrine of the fall from grace. From this perspective, predestination had a hollow ring, especially if some Protestants who denied the humanity of others on the basis of skin color were among God's chosen.

Still, to cast black southern Baptists as theological liberals would be a stretch. Georgia's black Baptists held a theological position that drew on their inherited theological conservatism while offering a blatant critique of southern society. Like the social gospelers in northeastern cities whose theology was shaped from their material existence, southern black Baptists also fashioned a set of beliefs that corresponded to the world in which they lived. Their gospel arose from the barrenness of segregation, racial inequality, and the attendant conditions of poverty and want in a country that celebrated equality and laid claim to being the harbinger of democracy—for the world. Like evangelicals everywhere, Georgia's black Baptists believed that lost souls could be saved through regeneration. Sinners need not remain in a condition of permanent moral turpitude. While black Baptists continued to pay homage to original sin, their faith claims were in fact remarkably optimistic.

Embedded in their understanding of Christian faith was an idealism that undermined the harshest Calvinist doctrines. For instance, writing about man's constant striving toward perfection, D. D. Crawford, a leader of the state's black General Missionary Baptist Association, wrote that the "principles and truth of God are character builders and life givers." The constant and unrelenting struggle for certainty produces "individuals and . . . nations [that] are growing more and more like Christ." This was a message about a progressive revelation in which the earthly Kingdom became better and better. Crawford did not limit his concerns to individual salvation. In his view, society was broken and needed to be repaired: only then could perfection be achieved, both collectively and individually. Sharing the American-born and German-educated radical social gospeler Walter Rauschenbusch's millennial optimism, to which he added a strong dose of patience, Crawford wrote, "it takes a long time to renovate the world."[37]

While not exactly capitalists, Savannah's black Baptists were committed to entrepreneurial business practices as the way to protect themselves from the ravages of an inhospitable world. As chapter 1 shows, black Christians in Savannah believed that black-owned business was the key to interclass

community solidarity as well as secular and sacred salvation. They rejected the unyielding competition and unchecked profiteering that characterizes capitalism, for that kind of behavior undermined community and fellowship. Yet they did not share Rauschenbusch and other social gospelers' Marxist analysis of capitalism: they did not argue that capitalism led to massive unemployment, perilous working conditions, insufficient wages, and poverty. Black Christians, moreover, were not socialists. They regarded socialism as a German import, and remaining true to southern conservatism, they rejected all things German: socialism, simply put, was un-American. Still, there was some degree of ethical and moral harmony between black Baptists and the social gospelers. As R. J. Johnson wrote in the state's black Baptist newspaper, "God never did intend that unbridled strength should have unlimited sway over the destinies of the less fortunate." This notion of too much influence over workers who were struggling to make a living no doubt inspired Savannah's black Baptists' support for trade unions and the workers' right to strike. When black railroad workers went on strike in 1922, not only did the Baptist Ministers Union endorse their struggle, but they personally supported the workers financially and took up missionary offerings for them during church services. That same year, the Woman's Convention of Georgia's General Missionary Baptist Convention endorsed the right of "colored" porters to organize their union, and four years later, when the Pullman porters went on strike for union recognition, black clergy in Savannah defended their right.[38]

Notwithstanding black Christians' empathy for the suffering, their liberal theological inclinations, albeit in embryonic form, did not make inroads into dominant southern conservative religious thought. In fact, the heated theological disputes between liberals and fundamentalist conservatives during the 1920s in the North were absent in the South because the dominant force in southern Protestantism was so conservative there was little to struggle over. Ever since the Civil War, most white southerners had been against liberalism and modernism, which they associated with Yankee culture. The leading spokesman for the fundamentalist-conservative coalition of dispensationalist premillenialists (who rejected the equation of the progress of the Kingdom and democratic society) was the southern-born and -reared J. Gresham Machen, professor of New Testament at Princeton Theological Seminary. By the 1920s, modernism (a euphemism for Darwinism among northern theological conservatives) was in the South a euphemism for Yankee imperialism. Darwinism, like the threat of another Yankee incursion, amounted to a pessimistic view of the world and contemporary history—both of which were expected to degenerate further and further until Christ's return.[39]

While conservatives were engaged in a "battle royal for the Fundamentals" in the North, as one of their chief architects put it, black Christians in Savannah were debating among themselves the pros and cons of scientific Darwinism. The year was 1925, and William Jennings Bryan (a Presbyterian layperson and three-time Democratic Party presidential candidate and the secretary of state in President Wilson's administration until his resignation on the eve of the war) was coming head to head with Clarence Darrow at the trial of John Scopes, who had been indicted for teaching evolution in a Tennessee high school. It is hardly surprising that some black Baptists adopted a conservative position: Pastor L. M. Glenn of First Bryan preached a sermon entitled "War Between Science and Religion," which, according to a newspaper announcement, promised to be not only an attack on creationism as anathema to biblical inerrancy but also a manifesto on the dangers of liberal theology itself. Modernism, read the announcement, was subverting the Christian nation: it was nothing more than a "sect . . . that discredits the story of the Divine Birth," the basis of all of humankind. One wonders whether Glenn intended a hint of irony when he promised a "scientific" defense of the Bible, "the inspired book of God, and the hope and salvation of the world." Rev. E. G. Thomas also came down on the side of the Creationists in a Sunday sermon, entitled "Creation and the Providence of God," basing his message on Acts 17:26, a New Testament reference to Adam, "from whom every nation of men was made."[40]

Not everyone followed Glenn and Thomas's example. Black southerners had a history of looking toward the North to find relief from local tyranny. Since they never shared white southerners' hostility to the North, there was more room in their world for theological discussion and debate. Six months after scientific modernism prevailed in the courts, the Women's Bible Class of Second Baptist sponsored a public debate on the resolution "That the Theory of Evolution Conflicts with Biblical Teaching." They invited two members from First African to debate two members of their own congregation. While details of the event have not survived, there is some significance to the mere fact that not only did mainline Baptist churches promote a discussion of evolution, serious consideration was given to the possibility that religion and science could co-exist. Several years before the Scopes trial, Arnold E. Gregory, pastor of First Congregational, delivered a series of sermons on creationism and evolutionism in which he argued that "there is no essential difference fundamentally between creation as evolution accounts for it, and creation as the book of Genesis accounts for it." Both, insisted the minister, are forms of "progressive growth," and together they strengthen religion.[41]

Given the Congregational denomination's roots in New England liberal theology, Arnold's position was not surprising.

More surprising was the critical stance toward fundamentalist opposition to evolution taken by Rev. Mack T. Williams, who pastored First African Baptist briefly at the end of the 1920s before he was dismissed under vague circumstances. One Sunday morning Williams delivered a sermon provocatively entitled, "The Second Creation," which promised to be an erudite exploration of the meaning of truth, evolution, and creationism. "Was Creation a definite event or a continuous process?" asked the minister. The question that really concerned him was whether the principles of creationism and evolutionism are mutually exclusive. "Is it rational," wondered Williams, "to expect the ultimate infinite creation?" Williams often explored the possibility of contingency and chance, two principles that did not sit well with fundamentalists and conservatives who believed so fervently in divine will and truth in the Word. In another sermon, "The Man Nobody Knows," he promised to explore the existence of "creative spirits lying back of the absolute." Although we will never know for sure, one wonders whether Williams's flirtation with theological modernism contributed to grounds for his dismissal.[42]

Despite white southern skittishness about Yankee influence, southern theological conservatives were receptive, albeit begrudgingly, to the fundamentalist views of professional revivalists of the North, especially Dwight Moody and Ira Sankey. Black Baptists were far more enthusiastic in their support of Moody and the controversial heir to the revivalists' throne, Billy Sunday. After Moody's death in 1899, the fundamentalist views of the Moody Bible Institute were given voice in *The Georgia Baptist*, through a syndicated column. The columns addressed themes that were unremarkable given the religious and political climate that had taken root in the major denominations in the North, and they help locate the conservative strain of black Baptist theology in the South. Southern black Baptists adopted a Christian civilizationist version of the Christian nativism that the Moody Institute espoused. They were receptive to the teachings that promoted a "natural harmony" between American patriotism and "true" Christianity, which contributed to the rabid anti-German hysteria that swept across much of America during the war years and, as already stated, may have contributed to black Baptists' cool regard for the social gospelers' piercing criticisms of capitalism.[43]

While most black Americans saw their country's participation in World War I as an opportunity to secure a democracy and equality that at long last would include them, the war itself had many critics, ranging from those who were uncertain about whether America should be involving itself in a struggle between two rival empires to those who were convinced that America's

intentions had nothing to do with spreading democracy. President Wilson's administration understood that in order to win the war abroad it would have to win on the home front as well. To that end, the government created the Center on Public Information, whose job was to issue propaganda that defined America's fight as a struggle for freedom—against Germany, a nation of barbaric Huns. Georgia's black Baptists joined with other Americans in criticizing the Germans. In a fundraising appeal before the Southern Baptist Convention, one of the state's most prominent black Baptist preachers, Rev. C. T. Walker, equated Kaiserism and Rauschenbusch's theology with Godlessness. The "Black Spurgeon," as Walker's admirers referred to him, was appealing to the SBC to fund a seminary for black Baptists—to serve as a fortress against German barbarism. "The Kaiser," declared Walker, "is a modern Nebachadnezzer. The edict has gone forth: Kaiserism must be crushed. . . . Truth and righteousness must reign and Jesus Christ must be crowned King of all the world." The SBC pledged $5,000 on the spot and assured Walker and the others from the Georgia Baptist Convention that while they "had always been interested in the work among Negroes" because they were "naturally Baptist," there was an urgency to this support because it would offset the "cheap theology emanating from Berlin and sweeping over the United States."[44]

Southern Baptists were suspicious of white liberal northern Protestants for other reasons, too, including their propensity to reject denominationalism—and by extension church autonomy—in their attempts to bring together all Christians into one house. All such efforts, they believed, represented an attack on the Baptist faith. Baptists have always jealously guarded the principle of absolute independence and local church governance. Tradition and history organized Baptist polity around a belief in the superiority of the sovereign New Testament church community, an idea that preserved the relationship between each member and God and that was typically expressed in church covenants. Baptists opposed the interdenominationalism that had gained so much ground among liberal theologians and their supporters because it undermined this sacred relationship as well as church orthodoxy.

It must have annoyed the Baptists no end in 1918 when John D. Rockefeller Jr. circulated a pamphlet that made a case for a "Universal church," which "would pronounce ordinance, ritual, creed, all non-essential for admission into the kingdom of God and His church." Rockefeller was cut from the same cloth as his father, who founded both Spelman College for black women in Atlanta in the 1880s and, in one journalist's acerbic words, "the principle of interlocking stock pledges, known as a trust, through which he could levy a monopoly fee on the industrial development of the entire

country." Rockefeller, schooled by the best, understood well how to combine paternalism and profit and to convince himself, and others, that his love for *all* humanity was sincere. In 1902 he secured $33 million of his family's fortune to endow the General Education Board for the benefit of educating poor southerners. Twelve years later, by then the doyen of the family, Rockefeller unleashed his private militia on a tent city of workers who were striking against his family's mining interests in Ludlow, Colorado, killing six men and thirteen women and children. In 1922 Rockefeller came up with his idea to build the Universal Church in New York City in order to advance his idea of bridging the chasm between ancient faith and scientific modernism. Ironically, when the church—known as Riverside Church—was completed in 1933, the first minister to serve as its senior pastor was the well-known outspoken opponent of all kinds of injustice, Harry Emerson Fosdick.[45]

All the money in the world would not convince Georgia's black Baptists to yield to the principle of interdenominationalism—although their reasons had more to do with doctrine and polity than moral duplicity. Like other theological conservatives, Georgia's black Baptists saw themselves as the advance guard in the battle to maintain orthodoxy in a country becoming overrun by secularism. As D. D. Crawford saw things, while urbanization, the growth in commerce, and the rapid circulation of knowledge may have been undermining the "simplicity" of Baptist orthodoxy among white brethren, especially in the North, southern black Baptists would resist such fashions. Crawford wrote that if only one church could exist, it would have to be a Baptist church. Rockefeller, he added, was a Baptist, and he would be better off improving the denomination, not sabotaging it. "Thank God colored Baptists hasn't sense 'nough to 'splain away de Scriptures," read an editorial in *The Georgia Baptist*. And since the Scriptures made a point of mentioning full immersion (as opposed to a sprinkling)—a defining rite for the Baptist—the Baptists could be the only real Christians. The point was "loyalty to Jesus Christ," argued the commentary, not whether "the Baptists are gaining ground or losing."[46]

Finally, on the question of church polity, black and white Baptists, unlike all other Protestant denominations, historically have rejected formal structures that stand outside individual faith communities as usurpers of local power. The church's political power, theoretically at least, resided with the congregation. Church members decided who was called to the pulpit—and who was dismissed. Rockefeller's proposal for a universal church was an affront to all of that. The idea of joining a synod or any other type of governing structure with non-Baptists was more than Georgia's black Baptists could bear. For this they reserved their harshest comments: "We hope they will

soon see that apeing [*sic*] Rome, Episcopalizing Baptist Churches, holding 'union meetings' with Methodists, standing sponsors for the church federation business, and weakening the local church by going far in support of interdenominational organizations, is something others may be allowed to do—Baptists never."[47]

While Savannah's black Baptists rejected formal extra-church organizations, informal affiliations were another story. Black Baptists have voluntarily entered into informal associations much more easily and with less contention than their white co-religionists. Ministers unions, associations, and conventions arose naturally as black Baptists sought independence from white churches, first in the antebellum North and then in the South following Emancipation. Joining these associations were expressions of unity and solidarity that arose from the struggles for racial and religious autonomy, as well as protection from the racial injustice that accompanied the formation of the "New South." Savannah's Baptist Ministers Union (BMU) supplied a modicum of theological and religious discipline for the ministers, crucial given the Baptists' propensity to spawn new churches, which they did in a world where many ministers did not have access to formal theological training. The dual principles of church sovereignty and congregational authority, if taken to an extreme, could be isolating. Weekly meetings of the BMU advanced Baptist fellowship: ministers prayed together and reported on the doings of their individual churches. They also used the meetings to hone their sermonizing skills, for to preach before their peers was a true test of ability. The Ministers Union operated as a kind of Bible study group where clergy discussed the texts that provided biblical foundation for the sermons they had delivered the previous week—or planned to deliver in the coming week—in their respective churches. The Baptist Ministers Union, moreover, was arguably one of the most important gateways to black Savannah during this period. When ministers went back to their pulpits they wielded a considerable amount of influence as ratifiers of projects and causes. A multitude of visitors regularly attended the meetings soliciting support for various endeavors, including, for example, representatives from Central City College, the State Baptist Convention's school outside Macon, on fundraising missions, leaders of the "colored" Community Chest who were hoping to drum up financial support, and leaders of the "colored branch" of the Anti-Tuberculosis League, which was formed to eliminate "the dreaded white plague" from Savannah.[48]

Even in their own milieu, Savannah's black Baptists clung to denominational orthodoxy. They resisted joining with black members of other faiths to address broad concerns. For this they came under attack by Sol Johnson more than once. Johnson believed that there was strength in numbers and that

strength was diluted by denominational separatism. Johnson was a Congregationalist, and like many of his denomination and class, he leaned toward theological liberalism and social conservatism. He believed that an interdenominational ministers' union could address not only poverty but also "debauchery." He also believed that the Baptists resisted unification with other faiths out of "selfishness and ambition." Savannah's black Baptists did not refuse outright to join forces with other denominations. In 1923 they cooperated with the other major denominations to form the Interdenominational Ministers Union (IMU). The IMU held a few meetings, elected officers—including one or two prominent black Baptists—drafted a constitution, and organized several committees. But the organization remained fairly inactive over the course of its existence, most likely because of the tepid support from black Baptists who far outnumbered all other black Protestants in the city.[49]

Black middle-class Christian opposition to Bishop Grace and "jack-leg preachers" who appealed more to the heart than to the mind was less about theological content than ritual form. Their opposition, moreover, had everything to do with the social processes of modernization, which involved the growing divergence between the sacred and secular and the sequestering of religious rite to private realms. As vigorous as black middle-class Christian opposition was to primal emotive religious expression, Black Christian Nationalism represented a bridge between the various classes. They sought not to exclude lower-class black Christians from their fellowship, just "inappropriate" expressive behaviors. Savannah's middle-class black Christians, moreover, shared the evangelicals' enthusiasm that salvation could be achieved by anyone at all, including those from the countryside and the cities and working and middle classes—even racist European-Americans could be saved.

Southern black Baptist opposition to theological liberalism, while claiming to be resolute, was in fact not a wholesale rejection of some of its tenets and an outright embrace of others. Southern black Christianity bore the marks of a complex social history that traversed place and time. As transnational subjects of history, southern black Christians were influenced by elements of black folk religion that derived from Africa, including spirit possession and ritual practices like call and response and the ring shout. But Africa was not the sole birthplace of African American religion. Black Christians' understandings of the ways of God and the ways of man were also genealogically indebted to Martin Luther and George Whitefield. From the slaveholding ancestors of white elites black southern Christians inherited a belief, however macerated, in original sin and human depravity. More than likely their ambivalence toward Calvinism was part of their African legacy—as were their understandings of God's intentions, markedly optimistic despite their collec-

tive experiences in a racist and often violent society. Theirs was a prophetic vision that placed the Kingdom of God at the theological center. Christian individualism, including personal salvation and redemption, was only part of the equation. The other part was a more perfect democracy, inclusive and just. While it is true that as southerners they believed that the Bible was the true representation of the Word of God, the social meaning of their faith claims were historically evolved, and from this flowed the conviction that true Christianity and racial injustice could never co-exist.

CHAPTER 3

"EVEN IF HE IS A WOMAN"

Savannah's Talented Tenth and Black Suffrage

On July 4, 1923, nearly six hundred "of the leading colored people, men and women," hailing from all corners of the state of Georgia convened in Atlanta to discuss the plight of "the Negro" and what was to be done about it. At Taft Hall "middle size men, and little fellows from the humble walks of life" not only "touched elbows" with the most venerable of the region's race men but "stood up and talked right out in plain speech." At the end of the day the convention issued "a ringing statement to the white people of the commonwealth," which was, according to the correspondent for the Associated Negro Press, "in truth a new Declaration of Independence, a magna charta." "The new Negro has arrived in Georgia," he wrote. "At least a new spirit has come to the fore." It is possible, he continued, "that the truths they are now uttering out loud have been in the backs of their minds all the while," for they spoke with "boldness . . . which a few years ago would have marked them for vengeance." A.M.E. Bishop J. S. Flipper delivered the statement "in pointed language loud enough to be heard all over the State." Indeed, the Independence Day meeting in 1923 was a signaling of a new approach to black social activism that would one day be less insular and geared toward black internal community development and instead oriented

toward creating democratic political structures. As was common practice at such events, leaders from different spheres of black life signed on, including ministers and bishops from every denomination, educators, newspaper editors, and businessmen—a tangible manifestation of the landscape of Black Christian Nationalism. They included Dr. John Hope, a lay leader in the Baptist denomination and the distinguished president of Morehouse College in Atlanta; Rev. J. M. Nabrit, president of the State Missionary Baptist Convention; and Dr. M. W. Reddick, principal of the Americus Institute, which like Morehouse received funding from the American Baptist Home Missionary Society and unlike Morehouse was located deep in the Black Belt, in what W. E. B. Du Bois once hauntingly referred to as the "Egypt of the Confederacy." Savannah was represented by Sol Johnson, publisher and editor of the *Savannah Tribune* (which printed the address in full), and two of the city's most prominent black bankers: Walter Scott, president of the Savannah Savings Bank, and L. E. Williams, president of the Wage Earners Savings Bank.[1]

"To All White Citizens of Georgia" was in fact a ledger of a full range of injustices that weighed against the state's black population. Beginning with the degradation and humiliation of separate railroad accommodations, which often relegated black travelers to the "baggage car, mail car, the butcher's booth and the conductor's desk, where our wives and daughters [are] forced to hear language too vile to be uttered," it included economic discrimination in the countryside—debt peonage and lack of access to credit—substandard housing conditions in rural and urban areas, separate and unequal public school facilities, lynching, and the state's commitment to the "involuntary servitude" of black men that was advanced through a judiciary system that sentenced individuals for minor offenses to long services of unpaid labor, which the state then contracted out. The convict lease system resembled "the days of legal slavery," confining each captive to "restricted quarters" under the watchful eye of a guard who determined his "downsitting and uprising." As long as white politicians continued to "run a democracy without all the people," declared the statement, protests would fall on "deaf ears." The declaration asserted that when black southerners articulated grievances in the form of protests or demonstrated black solidarity with the objective of changing the status quo, they were frequently "maligned and misrepresented" by the "cheap political demagogue" who raised the "scarecrow of 'social equality' and 'Negro domination.'"[2]

A stunning example of what could happen when black Americans spoke publicly in favor of equality was what came after the Equal Rights Convention held in Macon in 1906 under the guidance of William Jefferson

White of Augusta. White was a Baptist minister, civil rights firebrand, and founder, publisher, and editor of *The Georgia Baptist*, one of the most widely read black newspapers in its day. Along with friend and fellow activist Du Bois—then at Atlanta University—White brought together two hundred black delegates from the state's eleven congressional districts. The two men shaped the convention according to the principles established a year earlier by the Niagara Movement for Civil Rights in Ontario, "not as master and slave," wrote White in a letter to Du Bois before the convention, "but as man and man, equal in the sight of God and in the eyes of law, eager to make this historic state a land of peace, a place of plenty and an abode of Jesus Christ." These were fighting words. Georgia, like other southern states, had generated a bitterly racist campaign for the Democratic nomination for governor the same year the Equal Rights Convention met. Brotherhood in Christ, kinship of humanity, and equality before the law were revolutionary concepts in the political climate that climaxed in the Atlanta race riot, one of the bloodiest of the era. Angry white marauders tore through Atlanta's black neighborhoods dragging people off streetcars, slashing and mutilating black bodies, firing guns, and pummeling black residents with batons and stones—and leaving some twenty-five people dead when it was over. From his home base in Augusta, White, horrified by what had transpired, continued to speak out against Jim Crow, editorializing in support of a streetcar boycott by black Savannahians who were then protesting the inauguration of legalized discrimination. None too pleased, the *Augusta Chronicle*, the city's white daily, suggested that "negroes like White ought to be made to leave the South where there are no Jim Crow laws or where it is too hot for street cars." Not long after, White was run out of his hometown by an angry mob of white Augustans, and the equal rights movement all but died in his tracks. When he returned some months later and set about organizing a second meeting of the Equal Rights Convention, the whole tenor of the enterprise changed. It was as though White and his associates had come to believe that anything short of accommodation to white paternalism could have deadly consequences. Even the name of the 1907 meeting lacked the traction and truculence of the earlier convention. The benign Georgia Colored Association earned praise from the *Atlanta Constitution* for being "conservative" and making no references to "social equality."[3]

Sixteen years went by before a new generation of black leaders convened to test the political waters. In a sense the Atlanta meeting was a barometer of change. If a "New Negro" had arrived in Georgia, he appeared elsewhere in the state before it was announced in Atlanta. A new activism appeared in Savannah as a response to national events. In 1918, as the woman's suffrage

movement inched closer to the finish line, local activists formed a Savannah branch of the Federation of Colored Women's Clubs. Two years later, following the ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution, a female "Talented Tenth," emerging largely from the mainline Baptist churches, began organizing women of all classes to vote. By the time Bishop Flipper delivered his missive in Atlanta, black voters in Savannah had not only entered electoral politics, they had already been forced out. Which perhaps explains why Georgia's "New Negroes" tested the waters of political militancy so gingerly. While posing a challenge to the white political oligarchy, they applied salve to the white nationalists whose irascibility could easily spill over into murderous rage when they perceived a threat to their dominance. Georgia's black leaders wrote, "We deny the charge that we have either ambition for so-called social equality or desire for Negro domination." If this was an attempt to put the paranoid minds of white racists at ease, what came next was an obsequious, snake-like sibilance: "We point with pride to the record of loyalty and faithfulness of our fathers through two and a half centuries of slavery, the last four years of which put them to the severest test. How well they stood this test." To the extent that Georgia's black leaders were consciously dissembling for their own protection is difficult to know for sure. But it is no surprise that under these circumstances they found not only safety but also integrity in their own enclaves. Abandoning the language of social equality that White and Du Bois had adopted earlier in the century, their discursive strategy affirmed the less pugnacious *Plessy* doctrine that was outlined in the notorious Supreme Court decision of 1896. They challenged white Georgians "to join us as Christian people, in the task of working out a program of justice, equity and Christian brotherhood, which shall include both groups, *each separate in his sphere*, that . . . shall guarantee to both the fullest opportunity to come into the heritage of that larger and . . . purer life which bread alone cannot give, but which is so essential to well rounded . . . humanity."[4] The South's New Negro was walking a fine line between a deep commitment to black institution building and a durable desire for citizenship in a democratic society.

The roots of this complex strategy are found in the generations of hope and broken promises. When the North officially abandoned southern postwar Reconstruction, Afro-southerners had no choice but to watch as the larger world around them squeezed oppressively shut. The Democratic Party took over state legislatures, disfranchised black voters, and claimed public education, easily the largest public expenditure, as a privilege reserved for white southerners. It also created the one-party "Solid South," which stood for, among other things, white supremacy, reinforced (when necessary) by terror.

At the end of the nineteenth century white supremacy united southern elites in their opposition to powerful railroad interests, the banking industry, and northeastern-based corporations that plundered the South. Within the new state legislatures, different regions with specific concerns and interests competed for political dominance.[5]

When the Nineteenth Amendment was ratified to the United States Constitution, it looked for a brief moment as though black southerners' time to participate in the political process had arrived—again—and in a number of southern cities they sprang into action. This was an unusual turn of events. Women would go to the polls while men would remain disfranchised. In Savannah, black men encouraged women to vote. The mobilization to get out the vote, including the political discourse that supported registration drives and the exercise of voting itself, was a tangible expression of the meaning of Black Christian Nationalism, not as a representation of political desire but as a concrete manifestation of how it could be achieved. It would take a few years for white Savannahians to work out the meaning of the woman's suffrage amendment, particularly whether it would include all women or just white women. In the meantime, Savannah's Board of Education and several other branches of city government appealed to black voters to support a series of nonbinding bond elections to earmark public funds for specific projects. There was probably no public issue more important to southerners than public education. White southerners were particularly concerned with who would pay to support it, and the question itself became one of the driving forces behind the disfranchisement of black men well before the ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment. In the end, it turned out that this was not the historical moment for black southerners to challenge the *Plessy* doctrine. The job was simply too large to handle locally. It required addressing the question of citizenship for black southerners at the national level, and the nation was not yet ready to address it.

Reading, Writing, and Citizenship

After a visit to the Richmond Museum just after the beginning of the twentieth century, Henry James wrote about the "illiteracy" that "hovered like a queer smell." From "one ugly room to another" he surveyed a collection of "sorry objects," including Confederate documents, "already sallow with time, framed letters, orders, autographs, extracts, [and] tatters of a paper currency in the last stages of vitiation." For James, the museum and its contents became a metaphor for "the social revolution [that] had begotten neither song nor story—only for literature, two or three biographies of soldiers, written in other countries, and only, for music the weird chants of the emancipated

blacks." If this impression did less than justice to southern arts and literature and black religious expression in the mid-nineteenth century, it resonated deeply in other ways. Southern cities did not escape the cultural impoverishment of a colonial region any more than did the countryside. While liberal Protestant intellectuals from New England might have attributed the South's educational backwardness to the ubiquitous belief in original sin, the reasons were far less metaphysical. In Savannah, the *idea* of public schooling, introduced first by freed slaves before the blood of battle had dried, was successful in the long run. Nearly every black state senator and representative who served in Georgia's short-lived Reconstruction government beginning in 1868 introduced legislation for public education, and it was taken up in the state legislature in 1870, the year before Reconstruction in that state ended. Even the native white "Redeemers" who restored "Home Rule" in individual states promised to retain public schooling. And while technically they did the discrepancies between southern schools and those in the rest of the country were striking.[6]

To say that public education in the South was one of the few constructive and permanently popular achievements of Radical Reconstruction is not an overstatement. But because it developed as a stepchild of Redemption, it comes as little surprise that in 1874 the nascent system was already separate and very unequal. That year the United States Census Bureau counted 1,379 schools serving the white population and 356 for African Americans—despite the near equal percentage of black and white southerners. With his usual acuity W. E. B. Du Bois observed that the only reason black schoolchildren were not completely abandoned was because the Fifteenth Amendment gave African Americans the potential for suffrage, making repercussion at the polls a distinct possibility. In any given community black schools were markedly inferior to white schools, a condition that was unsuccessfully challenged in the Supreme Court in 1899 three years after the *Plessy* decision and fifty-five years before *Brown*. The case of *Cumming v. Richmond County, Georgia* meant that school boards were not legally obliged to provide high schools for black students.[7] More telling than the outcome of this decision was the fact that the challenge to this inequity made it all the way to the Supreme Court. When that happened, the writing was on the wall: disfranchisement would have to be utterly complete and legally codified before the leaders of the Democratic Party could rest.

From the moment the Redeemers captured the legislature in Atlanta, their main concern was how to thwart democracy. First they mobilized against political participation of the laboring classes. Then they concentrated on excluding only black voters from politics. When the Populist movement chal-

lenged the political status quo, Democratic Party elites, fearful of a democratic revolution from below, successfully divided the producing classes according to race and obstructed the possibility of democratic revolution from below. Some scholars have couched their understanding of black disfranchisement and the simultaneous rise of the Democratic Solid South and Jim Crow segregation as a problem of racial attitudes that could be resolved with measures that ensure racial diversity. This obscures the meaning of what was at stake. Those who attended William Jefferson White's Equal Rights Convention in 1906 did not jeopardize their lives for the sake of race relations, or to foster racial tolerance and promote multicultural variety. They and the black churchwomen who a generation later would vote in Savannah's municipal elections were locked in battle with the elites of the Democratic Party over freedom and democracy, the same set of questions that in an earlier era had stirred colonial Americans to launch a revolutionary bid for independence from their British masters. Black activists in the South understood that as long as any group of Americans could not vote by virtue of who they were, political democracy was nothing more than empty rhetoric.[8]

The disfranchisement of southern black men was a process that unfolded over time. In Georgia, as in other southern states, it came about as a series of procedural measures more than a decade before it was codified in the state legislature. First came the reinstatement of the poll tax, the $1 tax Republicans had introduced in 1868 and rescinded when they realized it would disfranchise all poor voters and undermine their cause. Next came the cumulative poll tax, which prevented voters from casting ballots unless they paid a tax for all elections, even those they did not vote in during off years when there were no elections, and before they could cast ballots. This measure, later referred to as the "Georgia Plan," ensured that the franchise was available exclusively to the middle classes and elites. Under the guidance of Tom Watson, white farmers learned to regard black tenants and sharecroppers as political allies tethered to them by economic ties and a shared destiny, rather than, in the words of C. Vann Woodward, "a slender prop to injured self-esteem in the shape of white supremacy." During the last decade of the nineteenth century agricultural unrest reached mammoth proportion, and for a brief historical moment it looked as though the Democratic Party elite might lose its stranglehold on the entire region—and by extension, the country. The Populist movement campaigned to protect all agricultural classes with cooperative schemes, a futures market for commodity crops, and other innovations designed to undermine the autocratic domination of rapacious finance and business interests; it even attacked the convict-lease system and lynching, a gesture of solidarity to the most defenseless producers of all. Its failure in

1894—achieved through bribery, fraud, and even murder—successfully divided the producing classes according to race and returned the entire region approximately to the era of the Black Codes.[9]

Never before, not even during Reconstruction, had black and white southerners come so close together politically, and regional elites flexed their political muscles to make sure it would never happened again. The antidemocratic devices known as the Mississippi Plan of 1890 were implemented without federal reprisal. Following the failure of the Lodge "Force Bill," in 1891, which would have enabled local citizens to call on federal supervisors to scrutinize and report on registration and voting irregularities, Georgia's Democrats passed a registration law requiring proof that the cumulative poll tax had been paid, further restricting black participation. Two years later, in 1897, Georgia adopted the direct primary for nominating party candidates. This was a wily scheme, for while it consolidated the Democratic Party and prevented its defeat, it conformed to the reformist zeitgeist of the period. The direct primary took politics out of backroom caucuses and placed them, transparent, within reach of ordinary workingmen. In a political field crowded with Democratic candidates there was a real danger of throwing the elections to any party—the Populists, the Greenbackers, the Independents, or a new one—that posed a challenge to the party of Redemption. The Democratic direct primary was the first phase in the creation of a one-party system, and while it was introduced under the guise of Progressive reform, it metastasized quickly and seamlessly into the white primary. Some black voters continued to pay their poll taxes, but the Republican Party was quickly outmaneuvered by the solid Democratic bloc, and their efforts went to naught. After all was said and done, the election of 1880 marked the last statewide contest for eighty years in which more than 50 percent of Georgia's black population could cast ballots. By the turn of the century, black people were completely eliminated as a political force in state politics. After 1900, less than one in ten African Americans appear to have voted.[10]

While the 1906 gubernatorial race in Georgia became a debate about black disfranchisement—not whether it should exist but how best to guarantee it—beneath the white nationalist demagoguery lurked the now perennial struggle for dominance between white elites from different regions of the state. The key to understanding southern politics in the period has less to do with white demagoguery and race relations than demographics and regional conflicts over political representation and access to government disbursements, especially for public education. More than half a century ago, Woodward wrote that the question of political power, while cloaked in the language of white supremacy, was really about "*which* whites would be supreme": those from the

majority white counties or those from the Black Belt region.[11] During slavery wealthy slaveholders from the Black Belt made deep concessions to the non-slaveholding Piedmont counties in order to protect the labor system. With Reconstruction and the principle of one man, one vote in place, the balance of political power shifted back to the Black Belt. Now politicians from white counties sought a reversal. When they fought over the way state expenditures for public schools should be distributed, they revived the question of regional dominance.

Altogether seven men ran for governor, and two elite newspaper editors, both from Atlanta in the Piedmont region, dominated the campaign: Hoke Smith of the *Atlanta Journal* and Clark Howell of the *Atlanta Constitution.* Both sought to keep black men out of the voting booth. Smith, running as a Progressive candidate, wanted to restrict the franchise to white men with a state constitutional amendment using all the methods that were already in place—including literacy clauses, educational tests (which typically required the registrant to read a section from the Constitution followed by an exegesis of the passage before an examiner with dubious educational credentials), and a grandfather clause. Howell opposed a constitutional amendment. He worried that it might have the opposite of the intended effect: instead of keeping black men out of the voting booth it was likely to motivate them to seek education, which would in turn disrupt the economy that relied on black agricultural labor. "Make the ballot the prize of education and every negro child in Georgia will trot right straight from the cabin to the college," he sneered. "Every cotton boll in Georgia would rot in the stock before they would pick it, and every blade of corn in Georgia would smother in the grass before they would lay down the grammar and the Greek and pick up the shovel and hoe!" Bowing before his white rural farming constituency who employed black labor or rented to black croppers and tenants, he added, "You have heard the old saying that 'whenever the nigger learns his haed hoc, he right away forgets all about the gee-whoa-buck.' "[12]

The implications of the white power struggles in the debates over black disfranchisement became most comprehensible when a minor candidate, John H. Estill, the editor of the *Savannah Morning News*, threw his hat in the ring. Estill hailed from Savannah in the majority black Chatham County in the southeastern part of the state. By the time he entered the race all attention in the campaign had been focused largely on disfranchisement, even though almost no African Americans were voting, and with no opposition party, most white Georgians saw no need for more restrictions. Estill believed that "the Georgia Plan for securing white supremacy" was working well enough.

Besides, as long as the Fifteenth Amendment remained on the books, he was concerned that the constitutionality of an amendment restricting suffrage to white men might be successfully challenged. Estill's uneasiness with the legal questions had a prescient quality, however superficial. White supremacist ideology had blindsided him, and he could no more foresee a future when the white primary itself would be struck down by the Supreme Court—which it was in 1944—than he could recognize the problem as an undemocratic embrace of democracy.[13]

Estill's concerns about legislative disfranchisement, while cloaked in questions of constitutional legality, revealed the troubled relationship between black disfranchisement and the desire to receive the monetary benefits the black population accrued for white citizens, especially in the area of public education, the single most important public expenditure in the period. The historian Louis Harlan pointed out many years ago that in Black Belt counties, "the system of segregation, far from being a burden, was a convenient means for economizing at the expense of Negro children." Education funds were dispersed as a lump sum from Atlanta to district school boards, which divided the money as they saw fit. In majority black counties, including Estill's Chatham County, the segregated school system was a handy way to finance white schools at the expense of black students without having to be bothered with messy politics in the state legislature. Standing at the juncture of good old-fashioned white paternalism and Marx's labor theory of value, Estill defended this practice. While he conceded that most "property is owned by the white people, it shouldn't be forgotten that the property wouldn't be worth a great deal without labor." He claimed that it was up to the "stronger . . . white people of Georgia," all of whom possessed a "strong sense of justice," to give "the negroes their share of the school money."[14]

There was no getting away from the fact that white Georgians, especially in counties like Estill's Chatham County, prospered the most because there were more black residents to count in public tax disbursements. In 1915 Savannah's Board of Education supported three grammar schools for the city's black children, who made up 51 percent of the students, and eight schools for white children, a record that majority white counties could not match. In the first decade of the twentieth century, the city built one high school for 657 white students and none for black students. Notwithstanding the relatively low premium placed on public education in the region, politicians from the majority white counties in Georgia resented the practice of allowing local boards of education to divide tax expenditures, and they tried repeatedly to legislate the division of property taxes upon receipt, creating two school

funds, one white and the other black. But their efforts were frustrated in the lower house of the state legislature, where representation was apportioned according to population.[15]

While stumping for Smith in early 1906, state representative Thomas Hardwick referred to the division of public school money when he said, "I am opposed to feeding the white man and the negro out of the same spoon." Coming from a majority black county, Estill well understood what the white residents of his county might lose with a constitutional amendment that disfranchised black Georgians. If the "Negro Question" were to be resolved legislatively, the racial division of property tax funds for education would likely undergo scrutiny. Not only might black students cease being counted in the public school census, but without a three-fifths clause to the United States Constitution politicians from majority black counties might risk losing representation in Atlanta as well as in Washington.[16]

Estill's concerns did not come to pass, at least not in the way he envisioned. Hoke Smith easily won the election in the summer of 1906, and about a year into his term he succeeded in getting legislation to support his program for disfranchisement. Following the passage of the amendment, the state legislature (for the first time) allowed for the levying of local school taxes at the discretion of the electorate. It was no coincidence that prior to disfranchisment Georgia and most other southern states prohibited this. Growing demand for educational reform accelerated during the disfranchisement struggle, and by the time black men were officially excluded from the body politic, Georgia's state school budget had expanded. This improved the lot for some white students in majority white counties, while leaving Black Belt counties on the same course as before. In 1910, two years after the disfranchisement amendment was ratified in the General Assembly, the regional disparities in education predictably deepened. Those counties with fewer than 10 percent African Americans in the population spent $4.20 per capita for every white child and $2.39 for every black child. Those counties that were between 50 and 75 percent African American spent $12.34 for every white child and $1.50 for every black child. In poor, predominantly white counties, increased budgets were heavily dependent on state aid. State appropriations declined once the electorate could vote to levy property taxes for education. Since poor white citizens lacked the taxable wealth to finance better schools on their own (and many were disfranchised themselves), legislative disfranchisement promoted not only a continuing gap between white and black per pupil expenditures, but greater inequality among white students as well.[17]

The minority of wealthy white residents in Black Belt counties continued to prosper at the expense of black residents. In 1920 the Chatham County

Board of Education supported three grammar schools—or common schools, as they were then called—for the city's black children and eight for white children. In 1915 not a single southern city with a population of 20,000 or more in majority white or black counties provided public education for black students of high school age. In the first decade of the twentieth century Savannah built its first high school for white students and provided none for its 51 percent majority black population. With the exception of 657 white students enrolled in the city's only white high school, public education for both groups ended at the eighth grade. In 1927 Savannah's Board of Education purchased Beach Institute, which had originally been established by the American Missionary Association in 1866 to educate former slaves and was later taken over by the black First Congregational Church. It was not until 1939, however, that Beach High School received state accreditation. The only other opportunity for black students between the ages of fifteen and eighteen was to attend the "normal school" operated by the historically black Georgia State Industrial College (since renamed Savannah State College), originally established as a land grant institution just outside the city in Thunderbolt. For black Savannahians, as for African Americans in other parts of the South, "separate and equal" translated into separate and nearly non-existent.[18]

The abundant literature on Jim Crow makes clear that even where there were schools for black children, those schools were sorely lacking. School facilities for black students were inferior to the already inferior southern school facilities; school terms, especially in rural areas, were shorter for black students, and black teachers received less pay than white teachers. Savannah's Board of Education ran double sessions in all three black city elementary schools. White public schools were also overcrowded, and some, especially county schools, operated double sessions. Even those black parents who were lucky enough to reserve space in the classroom could not be assured that their children would be able to prevail enough over substandard physical conditions to learn. The *Tribune* repeatedly railed against poor education facilities, including overcrowded classrooms, inferior textbooks, and decaying buildings. "In many of the grades the children are crowded in like sardines in a box, sitting one on top of the other," read one typical editorial. Another read, "It is one thing to crowd children in the classrooms to say that they are in school[,] but it is quite another thing to see that they are so placed in school that they will be properly taught." At West Broad Elementary School, "there is one double session class of 95 children in which one half of the children are without books." The conditions at East Broad Elementary were no better. The entire "afternoon B class" was conducted without books. The state of affairs at Maple Street Elementary, while not as "acute," wrote the *Tribune*, was

barely tolerable. There, teachers had no choice but to distribute "dilapidated and rather unsanitary" books to its students. The shortage of books was all the more scandalous since each child was required to pay a textbook rental fee before securing admission to the classroom at the beginning of the term. Although the fee was small, it was not inconsequential; some parents kept their children home for lack of resources. As dreadful as the conditions were, those children jammed into the classrooms—many going for only half a day, and more than three hundred children without desks—were more fortunate than the hundreds who were turned away for lack of even windowsill and aisle space.[19]

It is important to keep in mind that the regional disparities in education that benefited white elites in heavily black-populated counties that began immediately following Reconstruction were exacerbated and not inaugurated with the 1908 legislative amendment that disfranchised black voters. A reversal could only be achieved through political measures that would include the franchise for all citizens. It would take thirty years before the Supreme Court declared the white primary unconstitutional, another decade after that before the NAACP successfully challenged *Plessy*, and still one more decade after that before the Voting Rights Act was signed into law. All of these events were monumental for transforming the regional and national body politic, and they would not have been achieved without the constitutional amendment that gave women the franchise. The question of woman's suffrage in the South was a complicated one that underscores not only the obvious question of whether the franchise would extend to black women, but the enduring social legacy of slavery and whether white elites from the Black Belt regions would continue to exercise the most power.

Votes for Ladies

The slow pace of modernization of social relations after abolition had far-reaching consequences for all aspects of southern life, including the character and ideology of the southern suffrage movement. While range of opinion and ideology animated the movement in the North, in the South those who favored and those who opposed votes for women shared a remarkably similar worldview. The women's movement for suffrage appeared in the South at least two decades later than in other parts of the country. Slavery accounts for the late appearance of women-led reform movements, all of which emerged with a distinctly southern cast. In the antebellum North, industrialization, urbanization, and the rise of democratic institutions contributed to the transformation of work and sex roles and to the emergence of an ideologically ascribed woman's sphere. In the South during the same period, slavery

reinforced the centrality of the plantation and farm households. Antebellum reform movements led by women, ubiquitous in northern cities, were for the most part absent in the South. Reform associations—for example, the Sons of Temperance in North Carolina—were led by men, although women were on occasion permitted to attend lectures and sign petitions. Black women who were slaves during the antebellum era shared with white women of different social classes some of the constraints of prevalent gender conventions.[20]

In the early 1890s the National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA) focused its attention on acquiring the support of women in all parts of the country, not just the North and West. During this period some suffragists in the South engaged in tentative organizing, but most white women and men were still not ready to rally behind the principle of votes for women. For one thing, southern white suffragists were suspicious of the northern-based movement because its roots were in abolitionism. And for another, boosters for southern industrialism might have announced the arrival of the New South, but a more modern organization of its people was still in its infancy. While rural to urban migration accelerated immediately following the end of the Civil War and continued until World War I, urbanization did not produce the same kind of chaotic transformative encounters that typically characterized the cosmopolitan centers in the North. Even as family members moved to southern cities, they maintained deep and complicated kinship ties that continued to shape their worldviews as well as their views of themselves. Southern society simply did not yet supply the necessary traction for the idea of woman's suffrage to take hold. The region was still predominantly rural, and women had not yet become fully articulated as autonomous beings.

Around 1910 white state suffrage associations began appearing across the South. Three years later every southern state had a suffrage organization, including conservative South Carolina, which in 1917 reported twenty-five suffrage leagues with a combined membership of three thousand. The question why then, after lagging behind the rest of the country for so long, did a white suffragist movement take root? Some scholars have argued that southerners joined the movement only after national leaders capitulated to southern racism, which occurred in 1903 when the NAWSA met in New Orleans to demonstrate its intention to nationalize the movement. When challenged by the local daily newspaper to state the organization's position on woman's suffrage and black disfranchisement, the board of officers, responding with a respectful nod to the doctrine of states' rights, said that it was up to the discretion of state affiliates whether to exclude black women from their ranks.

This approach worked, but only until the NAWSA rallied around a federal suffrage amendment, which would have given Congress the power to enforce it. And if Congress intervened to compel the Susan B. Anthony Amendment, as the militant suffragists referred to it, a dangerous precedent would be established. What would stop Congress, for example, from enforcing the Fifteenth Amendment? It had already done so once, during Reconstruction. Might universal suffrage be next? White southerners' suspicion of federal power for any reason undermined any possibility of long-term sectional collaboration. While the northern leadership of the NAWSA capitulated to the principle of states' rights early on for the purposes of expediency, they did not take the principle to its logical conclusion. They refused Laura Clay and Kate Gordon's (representatives from Kentucky and Louisiana, respectively) demand to include a whites-only clause in any suffrage proposal to Congress in order to offset the possibility of federal intervention on behalf of universal suffrage—or any kind of suffrage. Northern and southern white suffragists were on a collision course, and it was only a matter of time before one tactical approach would cancel out the other.[21]

Political alliances, especially for single causes, rarely derive from principles deeper than the prospect of narrow victory. In backrooms where deals are made—and sometimes broken—expediency regularly eclipses justice. When leaders of the national movement excluded southern black women from the suffrage movement, they had a bottom line. They refused to legislatively bar the possibility of black suffrage, which itself could have been a measure of risk rather than principle or ideological belief. The building of coalitions implies exclusions, and the poignancy here as always lies in the simple truth of the matter that in politics it is always those who are the most vulnerable, who have the least to lose and the most to gain, who have to fight hardest to earn the right to join, simply because they don't bring sufficient bargaining chips to the table. For the second time in less than half a century black southern women were passed over. But for a few women who were active from Tuskegee Institute in Alabama, black southern women were not welcomed into the movement at all.[22]

By comparison with the northern movement, the southern suffragists were sedate and notionally uniform. It bears pointing out that in neither region was feminism prevalent; that is, if we take feminism to be, as the historian Christine Stansell writes in her study of bohemian New York during the same period, "not just a claim to the vote or to making mothers' roles in society more honored but rather to economic independence, sexual freedom, and psychological exemption from the repressive obligations of wifehood, motherhood, and daughterhood," all of which accompanied "a heightened female

individualism." If some northern advocates for woman suffrage demanded the vote on the grounds of inalienable natural right, the social order of the New South—still a weigh station between capitalism and a less modern form of social organization that was tied to the remnants of slavery—meant that virtually all southern white suffragists based their arguments for the vote on sexual difference. They claimed that women voters would bring special qualities to politics. The supple cosmopolitanism that accompanied liberalism and individualism in the North made room for feminists like Alice Paul and her associate, Lucy Burns, who the NAWSA brought in to run its Congressional Union in 1913 to campaign for a federal amendment. Not only did Paul and Burns believe in full equality between the sexes, they were willing to jettison all ladylike behavior to fight for it. For example, when they led a march of five thousand suffragists at the Capitol the day before Woodrow Wilson was inaugurated as president in March 1913, their actions were so unprecedented that they very nearly upstaged the new president.[23] If it is difficult to imagine Alice Paul or Lucy Burns in the American South, it is not much easier trying to imagine the NAWSA appealing to southern suffragists to support a Constitutional amendment. The story of the militant feminists, while a minority in the North, nevertheless illustrates a tolerance for ideological diversity while highlighting the political consequences of the uneven pace of social and economic modernization between the North and the South.

If the rise of the southern movement for woman's suffrage after 1910 was not the result of the North's capitulation to southern racism, it owed everything to the "emergence of an army of New Women of the New South" that was rooted in an emerging white middle class. The historian Elna C. Green shows that antisuffragism thrived in southern rural areas, while those who supported votes for women came from families who were employed in white-collar positions, including the newer service professions. Paid employment for both sexes undermined traditional kinship networks and contributed to a more vibrant civil society than had existed previously. Industrialization and urbanization created a need for progressive reform in areas such as child labor, education, and public health legislation.[24] The southern woman's suffrage movement, in other words, emerged from a similar set of economic and social circumstances as it had in the North, only on a different schedule and at a slower pace.

If southern suffragists were interested in many of the same reform issues that stirred northern activists, their language, frequently infused with the principles of white supremacy, was at times so venomous that it obscured reformist goals. While some of the debate focused on whether woman's suffrage would undermine white supremacy (as antisuffragists believed it would)

or whether it would consolidate white supremacy (as the suffragists insisted), there were other questions and concerns that impelled both groups. Textile interests, for example, including cotton farmers, mill owners, and merchants, feared that if women got the ballot they would make good on their promises to outlaw child labor, impose a minimum wage standard, and force maximum hours for women workers as well as establish costly health and safety standards in textile factories. Child labor constituted around 25 percent of the workforce in textile mills in North Carolina, Alabama, and Mississippi, and mill owners had a great deal to lose if women reformers got the ballot. The liquor industry did not find many supporters among the suffragists; nor did the railroads and those connected with them, because many of those same reformers attacked the corruption of big business.[25]

While white southerners were divided on the merits of woman suffrage, most African Americans stood solidly behind the principle. White antisuffragists' fear that woman's suffrage would undermine white supremacy was precisely what black Americans hoped for. In 1912 Du Bois editorialized that even though there was "not the slightest reason for supposing that white American women . . . are going to be any more intelligent, liberal, or humane toward the black, the poor and unfortunate than white men are," he believed that "every argument for woman suffrage is an argument for Negro suffrage." While the white suffragist movement gave black women no choice but to stand on the sidelines, they watched the political contest with interest. *The Crisis* devoted two issues to woman's suffrage, the first one in 1912 featuring Fanny Villard, Adela Hunt Logan, and Mary Terrell, who found it "difficult to believe that any individual in the United States with one drop of African blood in his veins can oppose women's suffrage." The point was not lost on numerous black leaders who attempted to revitalize the historic alliance between white women and black men and women that had been forged in the abolitionist movement. Ida B. Wells-Barnett and Mary Church Terrell unsuccessfully attempted to work with the National Woman's Party. Following a dispute with Alice Paul in 1919, Walter White, the director of the NAACP, said of the NWP: "If they could get the Suffrage Amendment through without enfranchising colored women, they would do it in a moment." Indeed, two years later when NAACP officials pressed Alice Paul to appoint a committee to investigate southern violations of the Nineteenth Amendment, Paul balked, suggesting that this was a "racial" and not a "feminist" issue.[26]

Despite continuing bigotry from all sections of the movement, Du Bois consistently argued for black women and men to support not only the principle but the movement for woman's suffrage. Immediately following ratification he editorialized from Atlanta University in *The Crisis*: "At last the

work of Susan B. Anthony and Frederick Douglass is crowned. From this day on in the United States a grown human being has the right to a voice in his own government, even if he is a woman." As for racial equality, Du Bois's comments, which were no less ironic, revealed his understanding of how social processes that appeared on the surface to diverge were, in fact, related. "How slowly the world moves in the commonest matters on elementary righteousness," he wrote. "To think that we had to wait until 1920 for Woman Suffrage and then got it by two votes! Yet in this very fact lies hope for us: A civilization that required nineteen centuries to recognize the Rights of Women can confidently be expected some day to abolish the Color Line."[27]

Du Bois was not the only one observing events like a hawk. Local black organizers in Savannah were also paying attention. Perceiving a political opening in the rigid strictures that had ended black political mobilization earlier in the century, they wasted no time organizing themselves for action. Although individuals in human history rarely, if ever, design their political circumstances, contingency occurs when they choose—or not—to seize upon a historical moment. Black leaders, especially women from the Baptist denomination, took advantage of the opportunity, leading scores of first-time voters to the ballot box. While they could not have known with any degree of certainty what the outcome would be, they must have sensed that their actions would elicit strong negative responses, at least from some quarters. The story of black Savannahians' struggle for the ballot illustrates a practical application of Black Christian Nationalism that advanced an interclass ethos enmeshed in a complicated grid of gender relations in the conservative South.

Savannah's Talented Tenth

Four years before ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment Senator Benjamin Tillman of South Carolina offered his opinion about woman's suffrage. He was opposed on the grounds that "Negro women would vote as well as white women," and in a state in which African Americans exceeded the population of European-Americans by 100,000 this could pose a problem for the likes of the senator. "Experience has taught us," added Tillman, "that Negro women are much more aggressive in asserting the 'rights of that race,' than Negro men are." One month after the ratification of the Woman's Suffrage Amendment, the *Savannah Tribune* predicted with accuracy that it would be black women "who will do most to bring about the real awakening of the Negro, and that awakening is going to come about through the intelligent use of the ballot." As it turned out, they were both right; only one man's nemesis was the other one's just reward. Already women were organizing,

and two months later the first of nearly two thousand had successfully registered to vote. Given the circumstances, it comes as no surprise that the blood of sisterhood did not run thick. Just as white suffragists opposed black female enfranchisement at the state level, a small but militant group of white women in Savannah, anxious to uphold the tradition of white rule, mobilized against black women's first bid for representation in the body politic. "If colored women needed any spur to cause them to go up at once and register," wrote the *Tribune*, "they certainly have it in the frenzied effort of the white women to prevent their registration." Not only did white women interfere with black women's attempts to register, they tried to have those who had successfully done so "stricken from the lists." Despite this pressure, the county tax collector, who doubled as registrar, followed the letter of the new federal law and transgressed the law of white supremacy, enrolling "an unusual number of colored women." The registrar, wrote the *Tribune*, demonstrated a "splendid record for fairness and faithful discharge of duty."[28]

The Nineteenth Amendment energized Savannah's black leaders' efforts to expand political space in the city. A small group of middle-class men and women, a local Talented Tenth, sought to engage as many black Savannahians as they could in the process of political participation. They comprised the "New Negro" in Savannah, at once assertive but still inwardly focused on their own group's development. For nearly two years, from 1921 until early 1923, black women voted in municipal elections in a series of nonbinding referenda on the budget. Then in early 1923 a faction of white Savannahians desperate to unseat the city's incumbent mayor in a hotly contested election courted black voters. This was the last election black Savannahians would participate in until after 1944, when the Supreme Court would strike down the white primary as unconstitutional. Despite its brevity this foray into the political process is worth examining because it illustrates both the strengths and the weaknesses of the corporatist aspects of Black Christian Nationalism. While the men of this group represented the fusion between business and church leadership—the foundation of this nationalism—the women were at the same time lay leaders in the more elite Baptist churches and the local black club movement. These women and men were black Savannah's "organic intellectuals" in the Gramscian sense, directly connected to a segment of the black working classes through projects designed to advance the interests of all. These enterprises included black businesses, educational initiatives, church activities, and the practical application of the Nineteenth Amendment through voter registration campaigns, with the goal of organizing the interests of black Savannahians so that as a group they could gain more control of their lives. While it was most likely not the case that they reached the

"turbulent proletariat"—as Du Bois designated the most marginal members of the working classes—since organizing venues did not include the pool houses, speakeasies, or the red light district, the mission of Savannah's Talented Tenth was to "scatter civilization among a people whose ignorance was not simply of letters, but of life itself."[29] Relative to the rest of the city's black population they were educated, and as members of the city's burgeoning black middle class, they lived in the most exclusive areas of black Savannah; most important, they (and their husbands) did not rely on white people for their livelihoods, allowing them a measure of autonomy that protected them from economic retribution for their activism.

If Savannah's Talented Tenth did not splay its influence into the wretched of the earth, it was also not as powerful or wealthy—and it was considerably less priggish—than the "traditional" national black elite known as the "upper ten." Those were men and women whose ancestors during slavery had been free. The "black aristocrats," as their biographer Willard Gatewood called them, were centered in Washington, D.C., Brooklyn, Philadelphia, and Charleston, and they had a reputation for "class snobbery and colorphobia." In addition to birth and skin color, their status was derived from education and property ownership. Just as this class would have no doubt looked down on Savannah's local black leaders—or at least not cavorted with them—one member of Savannah's Talented Tenth shunned this black royalty for becoming so "clannish" that it gave "rise to an aristocracy that exercise[d] . . . almost as much caste as the people of India." Her name was Rebecca Stiles Taylor, and she was a cofounder of Savannah's Federation of Colored Women's Clubs in 1918, which later became affiliated with the National Association of Colored Women and the National Federation of Colored Women. Taylor, moreover, taught at Cuyler Junior High School and was a major player in state Baptist denominational activities and an active member of Second Baptist, the most elite of all the city's black Baptist churches. She was also one of the principal organizers of the get-out-the-vote drive. Her institutional vehicle for her political work was not her church but the local club movement, which she boasted was launched to "unite the classes and masses." Taylor, like the other women of her background in the Federation of Colored Women's Clubs, advocated refinement for the black masses; but, she argued, they did not confuse cultivation and grace with "social preferment," as the national black elite surely did.[30]

The women who found themselves at the forefront of the registration and voter drives had been active in their churches for years. While men continued to dominate the churches politically, women, excluded from church leadership, found their political voices on the streets, as it were, in the public sphere,

inadvertently challenging their churches' insularity and suggesting the new paths the institutions would take some day. With some prescience, Taylor criticized Savannah's black churches for being "chiefly concerned with their immediate membership and affairs of their particular church." Looking back on the early 1920s from the perspective of the following decade, she could recall "no general movement" by the churches "for the benefit of the community." Women, on the other hand, she said, had "outstanding church record[s] for services rendered in every capacity generally permitted" them, and "their church records equal[ed] their social service records." Official church leaders remained focused almost exclusively on congregational and religious affairs while black churchwomen "saw God's bigger world outside."[31] Taylor represented what was becoming a striking contradiction between black women's developing political presence in the city and their exclusion from governance positions in the most important institutions in their communities. While women activists worked enthusiastically to energize and mobilize a black electorate, they did so without the institutional support of the Baptists, by far the largest denomination in the region. In a real sense, black Baptist women like Taylor who led the drive for political participation in the 1920s prefigured the modern civil rights movement—except that during the 1950s and 1960s the churches were institutionally committed to social change. In this earlier period, the Baptist churches seemed to practice a kind of benign neglect. Individual women members used church resources creatively while ministerial leadership remained conspicuously silent.

Mary L. Ayers, an active member of First African Baptist, was a living exemplar of what a woman could achieve when she plumbed the depths of the sacred world with an eye to what lay beyond the church walls. Younger than Taylor, Ayers had come into her own by the early 1920s, and she served with her mentor as an officer in the Woman's Convention of the black state General Missionary Baptist Convention. Ayers and her husband, William, who was a deacon at First African, were members of the most privileged sector of Savannah's black middle class. They owned the home in which they lived, and they did not depend on white people for their livelihood. Mary worked as a secretary, and her husband was listed in the manuscript census as an independent "contractor." Since 1918 Ayers had taught the Young Woman's Sunday school class at First African, which was no doubt where she honed her organizing skills and perfected the art of persuasion. The "young ladies class," wrote the church reporter in 1921, seemed "to have been an impossibility so far as progress was concerned[,] but for the past three years or more Mrs. Ayers has quietly and patiently stuck to [it] and today [it] numbers twenty-three active members and thirty-three enrolled."[32]

If Ayers was quiet and long-suffering in her church work, she was outspoken in her political endeavors. In 1921 she was appointed state chair of the Negro National Women's League, and the following year she became its vice chair to serve under Mamie Williams (referred to in contemporary accounts as "Mrs. George S. Williams") in Savannah's Republican League of Women Voters. By then Williams had become active in national politics, serving as state director of the Ninth Crusade, an affiliate of Mary B. Talbert's Anti-Lynching Crusaders whose goal was to get the Dyer Anti-Lynching Bill passed in Congress (against which Savannah's *Morning News* predictably editorialized on the grounds that it contravened the sanctity of states' rights). After the Nineteenth Amendment was ratified, Ayers used her position at First African to spread the gospel of citizenship. Without exception, every woman who was enrolled in her Sunday school class registered to vote. In a microcosm the women voters in Ayers's class illustrate Taylor's doctrine of uniting the classes and the masses. They were also a concrete example of the interclass fellowship intrinsic to Black Christian Nationalism. Ayers's students came from the middle and working classes. Their fathers and brothers included unskilled laborers, factory workers, a Pullman porter, and a railroad mechanic. Some of the women held white-collar jobs; others were solid working class. Some were renters, and others owned their homes. One member of Ayers's class, Rosa Lee Brown, was an unskilled laborer. Twenty-five years old in 1921, she and her father, three sisters, one brother, and two nephews rented a house on the modest though respectable 600 block of Park Avenue West. Although Brown was the only young woman from her household to attend Ayers's class, she was not the only one from her household to vote. She spread the gospel of suffrage to her three younger sisters, Jennie and Laura C., unskilled laborers, and Sarah Orr, a seamstress in a shirt factory—all of whom placed their names on the voter rolls.[33]

The interclass membership of the black Baptist churches made this kind of vertical organizing fairly easy to facilitate. Middle-class women sat next to factory workers, domestic servants, and laundresses in the church pews; they attended Bible study together and served with one another on church committees. The novelty of black women voting during this period prompted the local black paper to print the names of the 1,616 black women who were on the voting rolls in 1921. A cross-referencing of 10 percent of the published names with the manuscript census and city directories suggests the pattern in Ayers's class was citywide. The wives of black professionals, clustered in the fashionable residential neighborhood of the 500 block of East Henry Street, between Price and East Broad and on East Anderson one block south, appeared on the *Tribune*'s list. The men of these households,

whose lives are detailed in chapter 1, formed interlocking social and business networks through lay church leadership and participation on boards of directors of black businesses. The women achieved a degree of status through their husbands—doctors, lawyers, bankers, insurance company employees, and funeral parlor directors—and were themselves in many instances full-time homemakers. Margaret Blackshear's husband, Edgar, for example, was a director at the Wage Earners Savings Bank, and the couple lived with Edgar's sister and brother-in-law and a sixteen-year-old live-in servant named Wilhelmena Bronn.[34]

The second largest group included wives of those who were members of the labor aristocracy—skilled tradesmen, including mechanics, blacksmiths, carpenters, tailors, and brick masons. In many cases, their husbands earned enough so that they, like the wives of professionals, were listed as homemakers in the census. These families were not clustered in the most exclusive area but were scattered throughout "respectable" neighborhoods, defined here as a mix of homeowners and renters. Schoolteachers made up nearly 12 percent of the sample, representing nearly 50 percent of the city's fifty-two black female schoolteachers. Most of these women never married, but of those who did, their husbands were members of Du Bois's "respectable" working class. They included a Pullman porter and a waiter, suggesting not only the scarce educational and employment opportunities available to black men but the social capital that respectability brought to bridging class differences.

An equal number of women who voted worked for white families as maids, cooks, chambermaids, laundresses, and general servants, including three who were live-in servants. Of the 68 percent of women in this category who were married, their husbands were not members of the labor aristocracy but day laborers (many on surrounding cotton farms), wageworkers in urban white-owned businesses, machinists' helpers, and, in one case, a street huckster. Self-employed women comprised a slightly larger cohort, 19 percent of the sample. Many of these women took in boarders and worked on the margins of the formal economy to supplement the wages of their husbands, who were for the most part unskilled laborers. They operated cottage industries out of their homes as hairdressers, laundresses, seamstresses, and the like. Although the sources do not reveal to whom they sold their services, even those women who served white customers would have enjoyed a high degree of independence and control over their long workdays, minimizing reprisals for voting.

While black Baptist ministers remained low-key in the political process, they did not prevent their wives from becoming actively involved. Pastors' wives from the largest church down to at least one storefront church appeared in the sample. Violet Goodall, whose husband pastored First African, and

Margaret Wrenn, whose husband pastored Second Baptist, both officers in the state convention, registered to vote. Pastors' wives of the less elite although no less estimable churches also appeared, including Lettie Priester and Eva Canty, whose husbands led Happy Home Baptist Church and Bethlehem Baptist, respectively, and Annie Whitmore, the first lady of Mount Tabor and a cofounder of Savannah's black club movement along with Rebecca Stiles Taylor several years earlier, registered to vote. Even a member of a storefront church turned up in the sample. Her name was Addie Austin, and her husband, Israel, preached at Nazareth Baptist Church in Yamacraw, one of the poorest areas in the city. Austin was one of three black women in the sample who, despite her inability to read and write, successfully registered to vote—evidence that the city was not administering a literacy test, at least not to women. At the same time that some unlettered black women successfully had their names placed on the rolls, registrars were subjecting black men who attempted to register to the most rigid of cross-examinations. Savannah was still working out its position on black suffrage as it endeavored to forestall the worst fears of some of its staunchest supporters of white supremacy: the inevitability of universal suffrage.[35]

Sol Johnson, the publisher and editor of the *Savannah Tribune*, supported the franchise for black women with a simple message that stressed women's moral and spiritual superiority. Women voters would not only "inspire men, and give them ballast, character and decision," he said. Their "influence will purify legislation and government rule; it will take out of politics much of the corrupt and unscrupulous practice. It will remove much of the selfishness and greed of graft." In a world that at the same time afforded men citizenship rights long before women and disfranchised black men, black men's support of votes for women was remarkably self-sacrificing. Moreover, it was not a circumstance that occurred in every southern city.[36] Black men and women adjusted to the new muscularity of black women as expressed through the ballot box while continuing to defer to the idea of natural differences between men and women.

Johnson's message could have been made by any number of white pro- or antisuffragists in the period leading up to ratification. No one, black or white, it seemed, hastened a sharp break from the past, in which human beings were understood as social beings contained within and subordinate to the corporate body, at the heart of which was the family presided over by caring and protective men. In this social body everyone knew her place in the world. The suffragists incorporated the powerful myth of the "Southern Lady" that dominated the memories of white southerners and stressed the compatibility of the enfranchisement of women, femininity, and motherhood. Suffragists

claimed that they wanted the vote in order to become better mothers and wives, "to get back the control of the home," as Mrs. Elliott Cheatham put it in 1914 when she testified before the Georgia Assembly. The home, she argued, had been "taken from them by industrial progress." The franchise would enable women to select "officers" who "are in charge of the inspection of food and milk and water supply. And the only way in which women can see to it that this work, which is her work, is properly done is by the use of the ballot." Mrs. Pennybacker, a "declared suffragist" from Texas and national president of the Woman's Federated Clubs, stated in 1912, "Our men have always been so much better than our laws that we have been quite content with our very real chivalry. It is not that men have changed," she argued, "but rather that they have made us see that our help is needed in solving all the civic questions that relate to the home." Dolly Blount Lamar, from Georgia, opposed suffrage on roughly the same grounds. When it is time for women to vote, she said, "then men will gladly give it up."[37]

Rebecca Stiles Taylor posited her own version of the "Southern Lady," which corresponded to Cheatham's argument about the different jobs accorded men and women and Johnson's revival of the nineteenth-century idea of the dual nature of the sexes, when she wrote that there "would be no family life—no responsibility for children—no standard of morality if it were not for women. Women have kept the world good and are constantly making it better. They will in the end create on this earth a real civilization, for as they have risen they have carried men with them." While Taylor's embrace of the natural differences between the sexes did not mitigate her rather bitter assessment of the asymmetrical division of labor in the churches, where "the men do the ruling and the women do the work," she clearly favored a corporatist approach to racial advancement over an individualist feminist one.[38] In Taylor's world, which was a racially egalitarian version of Cheatham's and Pennybacker's, women were meant to focus on domestic and morality issues, while men concentrated on being breadwinners. Black Christian Nationalism by definition made black southerners more susceptible to not only interclass collaboration for the internal development of the race but to a world in which men and women were in synergy, not competition.

Mary Ayers took the principle of the inherent differences between the sexes to another level when she penned "An Appeal to Colored Women" of Savannah on behalf of the Negro Women's National Republican League. True womanhood, wrote Ayers, would be achieved only when "full citizenship will be accorded her." By this she did not mean equal citizenship or equality between the sexes, but the realization of white antisuffragists' worst fears. Votes for black women would "strengthen . . . the Negro men of the

Republican party and the race," she reasoned, and in the final stage of the struggle for the franchise black men would be able to successfully cast ballots. Ayers's efforts to energize black women's electoral participation were, in fact, designed to bolster the notion of true manhood, to return the political muscularity to where it belonged. She understood black women's insertion into electoral politics as a sequel to black America's epic struggle for freedom begun by their forefathers. In a meeting at the First Tabernacle Baptist Church in 1922 to encourage Savannah's black citizens to register to vote, she noted the political and historical inheritance left by "Douglass, Bruce, Langston, Pinchback, Turner," and a host of other "race giants" who in "the early morning of freedom" fought for "Negro citizenship." Participation in local elections, she argued, represented a striving "for anchorage in national life," and it was "up to the Negro women" to do their part.[39]

What Ayers excluded from her speech may be as important as what she included. She did not name Sojourner Truth, whose famous speech before the second Woman's Rights Convention in 1851 in Akron challenged white women of the movement to consider female slaves not as property but women. Or the more contemporary examples of Ida Wells Barnett and Mary Church Terrell, both of whom actively promoted woman's suffrage from where they lived in the North. In referring only to male freedom fighters and rendering women silent, she acceded to patriarchy and endorsed black southerners' corporatist approach to solving life's problems. According to Ayers, the goal of the Negro Women's National Republican League was to "lift the race"—not only the women of the race—"to a higher plane of American citizenship."[40] This articulation of equality was not grounded in a philosophy of natural rights for women that animated feminism but in a nationalist approach that suggested the importance of male protection of the weaker sex. This adjustment to what was a novel political opportunity may seem convoluted, but in the context of the evangelical culture that shaped specific obligations and responsibilities of men and women, it is a logical compensatory position. Women, with their newly acquired political muscularity in the absence of male prerogative, were defending men from emasculation and political impotency.

Taylor understood how black Americans wrestled with their own feelings of inferiority, having been told for generations they were unfit for citizenship. For her, the struggle for the ballot would be more than a fight against southern racists who sought to marginalize and exclude black southerners for their own benefit: it would be a psychological war as well. To that end, Taylor defended the race and the importance of its indivisibility in an eloquent expression of what we would today call cultural nationalism. She anticipated

the post–World War II French existentialist philosophical movement and the Black Power movement of the late 1960s and early 1970s, insofar as both were concerned with the connection between human consciousness and human freedom. "It is only through intellectual liberty," she insisted, "that human beings become free." Her search was for a new gestalt—one that was phenomenological and that viewed emotion as significant and purposive. The "Emancipation Proclamation broke the bonds of chattel slavery," she said, "but mental slavery still holds in its iron grip" the minds of African Americans. Taylor believed that the embrace of a black aesthetic as a way for black people to confront a hostile and dehumanizing world was foundational to the long journey toward human freedom. A glance at any issue of the local black newspaper yielded numerous examples of what she was talking about. There were advertisements for skin lighteners and hair straighteners, and while everyone "has a right to make himself what he considers beautiful or handsome," wrote Taylor, how sad it is "that thousands of black people are daily trying to change the color of their skin, the texture of their hair and in various ways endeavoring to resemble the 'White God' of their worship." She grieved for those of "fairer hue" who worked "feverishly to find some way of escape from what they consider the curse of humanity—one or more drops of black blood." But black ancestry was no malediction, she insisted. Even a "single drop of black blood" was "a priceless heritage of brutalized honor and innocence." Trying to "pass" was "unquestionable" evidence "of slavery of the mind." As long as "dark skin is a misfortune" and "kinky hair is ugly," black Americans will continue to suffer the consequences of "inferiority." Only when they achieve "spiritual and mental freedom" could they vie for racial "cohesion . . . among the black millions of America," which was "absolutely necessary" for not only "survival" but "permanent progress."[41]

While it is not clear to what extent Taylor's expressions of black pride resonated with her listeners, her message of support for black women voting to strengthen black manhood was another story. In May 1921 city officials courted black Savannahians to participate in a bond election to set aside money for public schools. This nonbinding election was tied directly to Hoke Smith's disfranchisement legislation that the state passed earlier in the century. Two weeks before the public school election, women had been permitted to vote for the first time in another bond election, this one to direct city funds to the segregated (white) Savannah Hospital. That measure failed to pass, which, according to one analysis, owed to light voter turnout, especially by women. Not wishing to preside over another anemic turnout at the voting booths—and recognizing the obvious appeal this election was likely to have for black Savannahians—the Savannah Board of Education

broke with all tradition and tapped into the organizational structure created by black women and men to support women's vestal trip to the polls. Black Savannahians leapt at the opportunity. This was the moment they had been waiting for.[42] The prescribed roles of men and women that received operational sustenance in the churches carried over seamlessly in the first elections ever to be open to black women. Preparations for the new experiment in political democracy illustrate not only how black Savannahians used their political and sacred cultures to promote education for citizenship but their practical application of the idea of community and congregation and a unity of interests.

Although black men were barred from voting, black Savannahians adjusted to the inversion of their traditional roles by conferring on a group of men the title "Committee in charge of the colored vote." Led by W. G. Alexander, pastor of Saint Philip A.M.E. Church, the committee included members of the city's business and professional elite, many of whom were lay leaders in their respective faith communities. T. Mayhew Cunningham, president of the Chatham County Board of Education, met with Alexander's committee a week before the scheduled elections. It was as though the board was acknowledging the unusual circumstances that bestowed the traditionally male privilege of citizenship on black women while rendering black men politically silent. After the meeting, which included a "thorough discussion" of the school bond, in a ritual act the men endorsed it. The election was for a $1.5 million budget referendum for the construction of a new public elementary school. It was not made clear which portion of the segregated population would benefit most directly even though the need for additional schools for black children was most critical. "As representatives of the race," wrote the committee in charge in a letter for publication in the *Tribune*, "we are deeply interested in the educational welfare of the colored people," and they called on those who were registered to cast their ballots. The women, led by Mrs. George S. Williams and Mary Ayers, and by Rebecca Taylor, representing the Republican League of Women Voters and the Woman's Federation Club, respectively, organized two "mass meetings" at Saint Philips and put the word out for all registered women to attend. According to the *Tribune*, both meetings were well attended, and in neither was "a discordant note as to the dire need of the issue going through . . . sounded." The "Negro realizes more than any other class of citizens the dilapidated and overcrowded condition of the schools and is determined, if his vote can remedy this evil, to cast it in favor of bonds."[43]

As it turned out, the Board of Education needed all the support it could muster. Given the deplorable conditions and dearth of school facilities serv-

ing all Savannahians, one might assume that any election in favor of improvements would be a sure success. But the city's Trades and Labor Assembly, honoring one of the more illogical aspects of racial segregation, created a critical roadblock. As the Board of Education prepared for this bond election, construction of a junior high school for white students on Bull Street was underway. For that job, the school board's contractor had hired non-union black laborers, which the trade union bitterly opposed. Rather than opening up the union to black workers, which would have maintained higher wages for everyone, Junior Parrish, the spokesman for the Trades and Labor Assembly, said the only way his union would support the bond was if the board promised to hire only white mechanics "at white man's pay" to finish not only the Bull Street School job but all future construction projects. According to the union, this made perfect sense since the school was to be "for the use of the children of white parents." (The Trades and Labor Assembly also lodged a general complaint about the state of classroom instruction, and without a hint of irony said public school teachers needed to offer more guidance in "higher moralities" and "good manners.") Cunningham dismissed Parrish's demands, saying that the Board of Education was not anti-union but rather pro-economical, and it had awarded the contract to the lowest bidder. The union refused to endorse the bond election, shooting itself in the foot for a second time. Not only would its members be outbid; they would rather have no additional school to serve their children than one that was built with the labor of black men.[44]

Savannah, no less than the rest of the South, was fertile ground for racism. The union's racist provocations resonated among white voters, and on election day the referendum failed—despite the enthusiasm of black voters, which the *Morning News* found "[p]articularly striking." "[N]egro women," wrote the white daily, "had their own room for checking the registration lists" at the city's headquarters—a delicate reference to racial segregation. While black Savannahians genuinely sought to win more educational opportunities for their children, it is likely they were realistic about the possible outcome of any referenda they supported. Nobody mentioned, at least not publicly, the result of a previous referendum for public education in which black men were promised and then denied a new elementary school in return for their support at the polls. This omission suggests that black leaders were contemplating the educative value of the elections as lessons in citizenship. The *Tribune*'s coverage supports this theory. It was congratulatory, praising black Savannahians' efforts to make sure the voting went smoothly, with everyone doing her or his part. The Automobile Committee, Flying Squad, and Checkers and Information Committee worked feverishly and like a well-oiled machine. Vot-

ers were transported between work or home and the courthouse downtown (precinct voting would arrive in Savannah the following year), questions were answered, and registration lists were consulted. Yet no mention was made of the failure of the school bond to pass, and what this meant for Savannah's public education system and black children in particular.[45] Nor was there any mention of the way white citizens of Chatham County benefited from racial segregation and black disfranchisement.

If black Savannahians were able to participate in nonbinding and therefore relatively benign city bond elections, the closer they got to real power the more opposition they faced. In early 1923 white Savannahians who opposed the incumbent candidate for mayor, Murray M. Stewart, solicited the support of black voters to defeat him. Stewart ran an opaque administration that mishandled the city's finances, and he was widely believed to be corrupt. His crooked reputation extended to Atlanta, where Georgia's newly elected governor pledged to withhold $15 million that would make Savannah a state port, unless the city elected an "honest and clean" government. In late 1922 James M. Rogers lost by nine votes in a bid to defeat Stewart in the white Democratic primary. Rogers's supporters, who included several well-placed municipal court judges, believed that Stewart's victory had been achieved through "wholesale fraud." Two days after the election the Chatham County Executive Committee conducted a hearing to investigate the charges. Supporters of both candidates packed the rafters. Emotions ran so white hot they overwhelmed the unflappable social conventions that typically characterized the white middle and upper classes. "Probably for the first time in the history of Savannah," wrote the *Morning News*, "hissing in a big public gathering was heard." Despite testimony and the submission of affidavits from sixty people, many of whom had been hired by the Stewart administration to work as "ringers"—voting under false names—and "sluggers" (who "grabb[ed] off men who were spotting the ringers"), the Executive Committee (many of whom were members of Stewart's administration) declined to open the ballot bags to cross-check the claims; instead the committee certified the election. The legal phase of the contest ended several weeks later when the Superior Court judge ruled that according to primary law, it had no discretionary powers to force an examination of the ballots. Mayor Stewart, in other words, won on a legal technicality.[46]

With no time to appeal before the election itself, which was scheduled for about a week later on January 9, Stewart's opponents spent their holidays gathering petitions to place Judge Paul E. Seabrook as an independent candidate on the ticket. Nearly seven thousand signatories—approximately two thousand more than were needed—bolted from the party of the Solid

South to put Seabrook on the ballot. Petitioners included many of the same black women who had voted in the previous municipal bond elections. The Seabrook campaign appealed directly to black women rather than through male power brokers, most likely because of time constraints. Their meetings were "attended by enthusiastic crowds." Not to be outdone, Stewart's people also met with black voters, but according to the *Tribune*, "the Stewart meetings fell down completely." In the days before the election "it was clear that Judge Seabrook had captured the Negro vote." It also became clear that Seabrook would have to run as a write-in candidate; the petitions, which were examined by the Stewart administration's city employees, were rejected five days before the election.[47]

Not since Reconstruction had black Savannahians participated in any election for political office. The difference between this election and the previous ones for nonbinding municipal bonds was lost on no one. For the first time since black men had been formally disfranchised the worst fears of the disfranchisers had come to pass: black voters were called on to settle a contest between white factions. The worst fears of the antisuffragists were also being realized. Black Savannahians were recognized as a constituency, placing them one step closer to citizenship. Although we cannot know for sure what promises Seabrook made to black voters since records of their meetings do not exist, it is probably safe to assume that the candidate played up the importance of the new port facility in generating jobs for black workers, especially longshoremen. As in the city bond elections, black women prepared to mobilize the vote in their communities. But with the stakes clearly higher, this election did not proceed as smoothly as the previous ones. The morning before voters were meant to cast their ballots, the *Morning News* reported that "reputable negro citizens" woke up to find under their doors paper signs brandishing the skull and crossbones and the words: "This is a white man's fight. Keep away!" The same message was stenciled onto placards and nailed to the Masonic Temple and "every negro church in the city." On the "large churches," reported the *Morning News,* "two signs were posted." Black men took command of the now customary election eve meetings, which previously had been run by women primarily for women voters, to offer reassurance and promises of protection. The "dastardly" threats made by the "cowardly night riders," as the *Tribune* called them, had the opposite effect from what was intended. Those who "acted like mid-night assassins" got their "just deserts by being hoisted by their own petard." Early on election day morning, as the winter sun was rising above the Savannah River, black voters gathered at their headquarters and together marched in the company of a few white souls to cast their ballots. Seabrook beat the incumbent hands down.[48]

The question of who was responsible for threatening black voters was never resolved: nor was it ever really investigated. The same day the skulls and crossbones were discovered nailed to the church walls, the Exalted Cyclops of Savannah's Ku Klux Klan issued a statement denying that his organization had anything to do with it. Smaller, unsigned placards, however, in support of Stewart with a KKK insignia attached were found around the city; it is conceivable that rogue Klansmen (and Stewart supporters) had placed the larger signs on the churches. Savannah's unruffled response to the threats reflects the relationship of the Klan to white civil society in the 1920s. The Klan drew its members from the ranks of the white elite. Homer F. Geiger, a member of the Democratic Party's Executive Committee (and himself instrumental in nominating Stewart for his second term), was, according to the *Morning News*, a "leading klansmen [*sic*]." Like any other reputable civic organization, the Klan was routinely contacted for endorsements in political campaigns. For example, during the December white primary that pitted Stewart against the incumbent, the Klan told the *News* that they supported neither: just a "clean, fair and square election." Rev. John Wilder and Rev. Leroy Cleverdon, pastors of Calvary Baptist and First Baptist, respectively (two of the largest and most respected of the city's white Baptist churches) were Klan members. The historian Kenneth Jackson describes the typical Klansman as "decent, hardworking, patriotic, if narrow-minded," and while he may have overstated the decency claim, members certainly saw themselves in that light. Thus there was no need to maintain secrecy. Klansmen were church members, family men, and successful business and professional men. They regularly conducted their business—including holding parades through the city's business district draped in "masked robes" and carrying burning crosses and the United States flag—in the light of day. The Ku Klux Klan was no more secretive than Sunday school teachers and even less controversial than Savannah's League of Women Voters. Names of Kleagles regularly appeared in local newspapers. All of which is to say, Seabrook and his supporters most likely regarded the threats against black voters, not as extra-legal vigilante attacks on democracy that undermined the Constitution but as legitimate campaigning, albeit falling into the category of dirty politics. Once Seabrook won, all was forgiven and most likely forgotten.[49] With the end of the crisis in city leadership, a new administration with favorable relations with Atlanta was installed in City Hall, and black women were no longer needed at the polls. The question of what the Susan B. Anthony amendment meant for black Savannah in the 1920s was finally settled.

This incident is remarkable for several reasons. Not only did black voters successfully participate in a direct election for mayor during the era of legal

proscription, the election itself represented a crack in the one-party Solid South. As a write-in candidate Seabrook ran as an Independent, won the election, and not by just a few votes but an overwhelming majority. While white Savannahians in the end united on the principle of white supremacy, during crises their political behavior could defy dogma, and they could prove themselves capable of acting in their own best interests. In the long run, those who intimidated Savannah's black voters were not hoisted by their petard—or anyone else's, for that matter. The display of black solidarity no doubt played some role in returning politics to the exclusive domain of white voters. Although the threats were not carried out, the image of the skull and crossbones nailed to their sacred institutions bore a hole into the psyches of black Savannahians. The racial climate remained tense long after the election. The following June, after an alleged attack on a white woman in West Savannah, a black man was apprehended on Grapevine Avenue and placed in custody. News of the incident spread quickly, and around midnight a white mob gathered outside the police station in downtown Savannah, demanding blood. According to the *Tribune*, the crowd swelled to 5,000 before the sheriff was able to disperse it, but not before one of his own had been fatally shot. As the historian Jacquelyn Dowd Hall wrote, the barbarism of mass mobs "did not have to occur often, or even be witnessed directly, to be burned indelibly into the mind." The sociologist John Dollard came to the same conclusion based on a series of interviews he conducted in rural Mississippi in the 1930s. Indianola, he wrote, had not had a lynching in many years, but the fear of lynching was "one of the major facts in the life of any Negro."[50]

The fear of lynching prevented black Savannahians from building on the momentum that commenced after ratification of the suffrage amendment. The 1923 mayoral election was the last time black women or men would participate in electoral politics until the era of World War II when the white primary was struck down as unconstitutional. During the rest of the 1920s and into the 1930s, the *Tribune* sporadically admonished its readers to at least attempt to pay their poll taxes and register to vote. And Rebecca Stiles Taylor wrote in the regional publication of the National Association of Colored Women about the importance of the ballot, underscoring her understanding that meaningful, systematic change would occur only when black southerners became a political constituency making elected officials accountable to them.[51]

Although this was not the historical moment for electoral politics to open up in the South, the significance of this early foray ought not be ignored for what it illustrates about the relations between the sexes in the context of the nationalism that I have been describing here. Two decades earlier Geor-

gia and other southern states had enacted legislative disfranchisement laws amidst a cacophony of racist demagoguery. At the same time, public education, an initiative that had roots in Reconstruction, had been hijacked by white elites. The speed with which the black leadership mobilized the vote and the corporatist understanding of group advancement—replete with tensions over the uneven distributions of leadership and labor—illustrate what the critic Hazel Carby calls the "possibilities and limitations of patriarchal power."[52] Women *and* men seized the opportunity, as imperfect as it must have seemed, based not on the bourgeois individualist ideal of one person, one vote—the direction in which other sections of the country were going—but as a countervailing adjustment to delayed modernization processes that were further distorted by the logic of Jim Crow. The ethos of Black Christian Nationalism softened the contradictions between acceding to patriarchy and individualist feminist assertions. Despite rhetorical flourishes that announced black men "in charge of the Colored vote," it was women who had the ballot. And despite the black Baptist churches' apparent reluctance to embrace votes for women while men dominated governing leadership inside their faith communities, the most vocal women came from the Baptist denomination.

In the end, citizenship for black Southerners would become a reality only after major shifts in the national political landscape. When the New Negro appeared in Atlanta in 1923, white nationalists held the region in a vice grip; they were accountable only to themselves, and there was no threat of retribution against the South for its interminable and inestimable record of injustices against black southerners. Bishop Flipper and those who convened on the 146th anniversary of the nation's independence predicted with accuracy that the only way the myriad of injustices facing black southerners could change was for the victims of injustice to become citizens of the nation. As enthusiastically as black Savannahians went to the voting booth in the early 1920s, white Savannahians pushed back—and won. Although the Supreme Court would declare the white primary unconstitutional in 1944, it would take another twenty years after that before black southerners could go to the polls and cast ballots without risking intimidation, and even their lives. Two years after the federal judiciary barred the white primary, Eugene Talmadge became governor of Georgia and joined a new generation of fire-eating politicians as firmly committed to the principle of white supremacy as Hoke Smith had been years earlier. Eight years later another historic Supreme Court decision, *Brown v. Board of Education, Topeka, Kansas*, removed the legal foundation of Jim Crow segregation and provided a potent weapon for freedom fighters to carry in their struggles to achieve black participation in the body

politic. With the demographic relocation of three and a half million black southerners to northern cities after 1940, black Americans could begin to exert pressure on elected officials to pay attention to what was transpiring below the Mason and Dixon Line. Until these shifts occurred, whatever black people were able to achieve external to their own communities was dependent on largesse, which could and often did wax and wane according to the whims of those in power. In the meantime, Black Christian Nationalism offered a safe retreat in a hostile world while providing opportunity, however limited, for community development.

CHAPTER 4

"HAVE HARDLY HAD STRAW"

Black Christian Nation Building and White Christian Philanthropy

Even before the Emancipation Proclamation, black southerners sought education with a singular devotion. In Savannah, African Americans had been operating clandestine schools long before the Civil War. The mud from the boots of General Sherman's troops had barely dried on the streets of Savannah when black clergy convened to form the Savannah Education Association (SEA). Within days after their city was captured they mustered all their resources and deployed them into a broad-based postbellum educational initiative that would touch the lives of former slaves. Before the arrival of the American Missionary Association (AMA) from New England, the SEA had formed an executive board, hired instructors, and secured a few key locations for the new schools, including black churches and the now superfluous Old Bryan Slave Mart, after "the bars which marked the slave stalls [were] broken." In just a few weeks they raised $800 to support five hundred children in school, free of charge. Louis B. Toomer served in the new system as "principal teacher." Toomer, a founding member of Savannah's Republican Party and a lay leader in the black Second Baptist church, was particularly well suited to

his new position: he had cut his teeth in the field of education before the war, surreptitiously spreading the gospel of the ABC's to enslaved and free black Savannahians (for which, according to Georgia state law, he could have been fined, whipped, or imprisoned). Toomer teamed up with John H. Deveaux (who would ten years later establish the *Colored Tribune*, from which the *Savannah Tribune* descended) and the Republican Party politician Louis M. Pleasant to publish an organ of Negro Republicanism—tangible evidence of the mischief brought about by Negro literacy.[1]

Outside observers chronicled the freedmen and women's first systematic efforts to organize education poignantly and with no shortage of wonder. In the fall of 1865, John W. Alvord, who would become the general superintendent of schools for the Freedmen's Bureau, filed a report with the bureau after traveling through nearly all the Confederate states. "Throughout the entire South an effort is being made by the colored people to educate themselves," he wrote. "In the absence of other teaching they were determined to be self-taught; and everywhere some elementary text-book, or the fragment of one, may be seen in the hands of negroes." In Savannah Rev. William T. Richardson of the AMA recorded what he observed on the first day of school in a letter to the Missionary Association's home office. "The army of colored children moving through the streets seemed to excite feeling and interest second only to that of General Sherman's army," he wrote. "Such a gathering of freedmen's sons and daughters, that proud city had never seen before." A year later, in 1866, the *Loyal Georgian*, the official newspaper of the black Georgia Educational Association, reported that sixteen schools were administered by the SEA in Chatham County, all of which were "taught by colored teachers, and sustained by the freed people."[2]

Soon after the SEA organized the first schools, officials working for the AMA arrived in Savannah and tried to take control of the education of the former slaves away from Savannah's local black leadership. The AMA saw Savannah as the key to its success in the whole state of Georgia, but it quickly came into conflict with Savannah's Education Association. While the SEA, which had severely limited resources, initially welcomed AMA support, they expected white teachers who came to Savannah to assist the already established black instructors, not take over for them, as the AMA assumed. The black clergy operating the schools were willing to accept financial contributions provided there were no strings attached, a position that one AMA official characterized as "preposterous." The AMA eventually came to control the education of the former slaves, sealing the fate of the SEA, when it won a large grant for education from the federal government's Freedmen's Bureau. In April 1866 a triumphant AMA official declared, "The field is virtually our own and in

another year we can enter it with a great vantage ground in having a house, school buildings and no opposition."[3]

The New England freedmen and women's education effort sprang mainly from the same reform impulse as abolitionism. The religiously based movements—the Congregationalist AMA and the Methodist and Baptist societies—sent the lion's share of educational resources south, including teachers and administrators. The Unitarian-dominated secular societies that had advocated the policy of "moral suasion" as opposed to political coercion as the most effective means for inducing the South to give up slavery concerned themselves with the education of the freedmen and women during and after Reconstruction as a natural extension of their earlier work. The historian James M. McPherson describes the teachers, mostly women, possessed by a missionary zeal to transform the freedmen and women into "ebony Puritan" versions of their "neo-Puritan" selves. According to one missionary teacher, the purpose of the New England schools was to introduce modes of capitalist civilization, to teach the former slaves to become "like Northerners, in industry, economy and thrift." No less important than instruction in the three R's and Latin and Greek were the values of social order, lessons of industry, sobriety, purity, and faith. One AMA teacher wrote in a letter home in 1876: the freedmen "are yet in infancy in virtue, truthfulness, self-control," and their "successful management" required gentle but stern authority in order for the whole educational project to achieve its goals. While not all black adults accepted this style of management or core belief (nor all white missionaries for that matter), one who did was Kelly Miller, a graduate of Howard University and a professor of mathematics and dean there for more than forty years. "The Negro does not make provision because he lacks prevision," wrote Miller. "He cannot see beyond the momentary gratification of his desires." Miller lauded the missionary teachers for "touch[ing] the lethargic faculties of the first generation of Negro college youth, as if it were with a live coal of fire." W. E. B. Du Bois wrote approvingly of the role of missionary teachers in the lives of black southerners in 1905: "It will not do in the South to leave moral training to individual homes since their homes are just recovering from the debauchery of slavery."[4]

Before Reconstruction formally ended, the federal government began the process of handing over the project of educating the former slaves and their kin to local authorities. Where voids appeared, northern missionary societies stepped in to fill them. In the late 1860s, the Freedmen's Bureau supported several hundred elementary schools. When the bureau's educational work ceased in 1870, most of its common schools (the contemporary term for teacher training schools) were absorbed into the South's new public school

system, and the mission societies concentrated their resources on a smaller number of secondary schools and colleges. This transfer of power from the federal echelons of government closer to ground level elicited questions about who would teach in the schools. Nearly all the teachers in the AMA schools were white, with the notable exception of the Avery Institute in Charleston, where a black principal headed an interracial faculty in the 1860s. This was hardly controversial since the number of black Congregationalists in the South was minimal. The Baptist and Methodist societies were under greater pressure to hire black teachers. The proportion of black teachers in the Methodist Freedmen's Aid Society schools was less than a third in 1888. In 1887 only one-fifth of the Baptist teachers were black. In the 1870s the trustees of the American Baptist Home Missionary Society's Howard University hired four black faculty members. By 1895 the proportion had risen to nearly half, but that was only because the salaries of 39 of the 136 black teachers were paid not by the relatively well-endowed Mission Society but by struggling black state conventions that were largely member-supported.[5] One of the central struggles of Reconstruction, namely the control over schools and education for the freedmen and women, had still not been settled. As the nineteenth century drew to a close, many black leaders fixated not only on inequalities in wages and teacher composition in the mission-supported schools but also on what should be the role for northern philanthropists in educating black southerners.

White Northern Philanthropy and the Education of Black Southerners

The political climate in the last two decades of the nineteenth century offered little in the way of hope for those who were interested in expanding educational opportunity to the grandsons and granddaughters of the former slaves. Race hatred was keyed to an unprecedented pitch, and lynching, which went largely unpunished by the state, flourished. In 1921 the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People conferred on Georgia the dubious title "Empire State of Lynching." From the end of the Civil War until 1920, 460 African Americans, mostly men, were lynched in the state.[6] The South's indifference to these extra-legal murders corresponded to its lack of interest in education in general: its lack of interest in educating black persons was tied to assumptions about Anglo-Saxon supremacy. By the end of the century, the slower rate of industrial development in the South meant that the challenge of educating black southerners compelled the interest of precious few with money and power; there were white liberal northerners of various persuasions, including a well-placed industrialist or two. Booker T.

Washington's model of industrial education may have captured the attention of some, including many though not all philanthropists, but not Georgia's black Baptists. They tenaciously promoted classical education, which they regarded as necessary training for leadership and responsible citizenry, and industrial education, which they saw as an adjunct to academic studies, not a replacement.

Industrial education, while not a distinctly American concept, has a unique history in the American landscape. It first came into vogue, not as a way to sentence the descendants of slaves to a lifetime of performing menial chores for the economic development of others, but as part of the whole ferment of antebellum reform, which included temperance and sabbatarianism, trade unionism, utopian socialism, pacifism, abolitionism, women's rights, free public schools, the care of the insane, and the reform of the criminal. Much of the theorizing on industrial education had strong moral overtones about the inculcation of habits of thrift and industry, morality and economy, and a feeling for the "dignity of labor." Industrial education, which had its origins in European educational reform, appeared first in the form of apprenticeships, and it was off limits to black Americans. After the Civil War it remained as it was in Europe, a "top down" movement to educate the sons of the nation's elite. Even then industrial education had nothing to do with Africa's progeny or race, and everything to do with the industrial revolution, which created a market for a new kind of professional elite. The chartering of Massachusetts Institute of Technology in 1861 and the establishment of scientific schools at Harvard and Yale in the same period signaled some of the innovations in industrial education that were adopted by and for educated elites. In 1915, after it became widely associated with Booker T. Washington's educational mission, John Hope, the president of Morehouse College, affirmed his support for industrial education as a progressive measure, saying he had sent his own son to a private school when he realized that the Atlanta public schools offered no industrial education. "I believe in the modern sort of education," he said. "As I say, I took my own boy out in order that he might get it." This is not to say that Hope supported replacing academic courses in primary and secondary education with vocational subjects; only that he believed the most innovative education was a healthy combination of both.[7]

If the original idea of combining vocational and liberal education in the same curriculum could not be ascribed with nefarious goals, the process by which the notion of industrial education became synonymous with the idea of a special kind of training for a "backward race" was the result of a three-way convergence between educational reform, postslavery industrial devel-

opment, and the reinvention of the ideology of southern white supremacy. The defining moment came when the AMA appointed Samuel C. Armstrong, an agent of the Freedmen's Bureau, principal of its new school at Hampton, Virginia. Advocates of white supremacy ignored the spirit of Armstrong's early pronouncements on the harmonizing qualities and egalitarian aims of industrial and academic education, reading into them their own conviction that industrial education alone would guarantee the freedman and his descendants' subordination to white men. It was southern white supremacists, not Armstrong, who defined the Hampton idea, which in the 1880s became ubiquitous as the Tuskegee idea. Industrial education would not even provide a lever for advancement, as Booker T. Washington himself would argue in his famous "Atlanta Compromise" speech in 1895.[8]

Debates over industrial education foreshadowed and corresponded to disagreements among different factions of black Baptists and white philanthropists. During the penultimate decade of the nineteenth century ruptures appeared everywhere between leaders of the black Baptist denomination and northern donors. As affairs between white and black southerners worsened, different groups of black Baptists found themselves at odds over their relationships with their patrons from the North. By the end of the century the employment of black teachers in the Baptist missionary schools had not only become a perennial issue; it developed into a more general question of black denominational control. The men who fought the hardest for academic power formed the nucleus of an emerging black middle class. As graduates of American Baptist Home Missionary Society (ABHMS) schools themselves, these men were more educated than their fathers but were outflanked by Jim Crow racial proscriptions; consequently, the schools they had attended became important sites of contention for their political ambitions. Not surprisingly, the most vocal of the black Baptists vying for more influence had adopted many of the cultural and religious styles of white Baptists from New England who had taught them, and their education and acculturation led them to anticipate respect from northern missionaries, including a reasonable expectation that they would gradually assume leadership of the denominational schools they had attended. When their expectations were not met, they began to talk about organizing their own independent denominational school. Replete with cultural bias and elite understandings of racial advancement, this rising middle class defended and aspired to individual achievement, while seeing themselves as custodial in relation to all African Americans. Their struggle was less for racial advancement, at least not in the way white pundits and politicians understood the concept of race (as denoting inherent biological difference and inferiority), than for the progress of a people.

Their belief in a collective destiny restrained temptation to disassociate themselves from those of lower station and status. They were especially vigilant of moral deficiency and relapse among their own ranks. They demonstrated a spirit of camaraderie with those who had fewer advantages, and "lifting as they climbed," to borrow the motto of the National Association of Colored Women, their idea of racial "uplift" was less about excluding the unlettered manual laboring classes than transforming them.

Black Baptist recipients of ABHMS largesse who were beginning to talk about starting their own schools yearned for regard and reward for their educational achievements. They desired not complete separation from northern white influence but teaching jobs and meaningful decision-making pull. Northern philanthropists, however, had good reason to suspect that the integration of the faculty and administration of missionary-supported schools, even while the student bodies remained predominantly black, would invite repercussions by white southerners, indeed full-scale conflict. In 1887 Georgia's state legislature "discovered" the presence of white students in Atlanta University classes, where they had been in attendance since the school's inception. Predictably the legislature slashed Atlanta's $8,000 annual appropriation and threatened to pass a bill that would have sent graduates of Yale, Andover, and Oberlin who were then teaching at Atlanta to a chain gang for promoting "social equality." Given the harsh reaction to integrated classrooms, which in fact amounted to little more than white tokenism (mostly sons of state legislators), it is not difficult to speculate about what might have occurred had Atlanta's faculty been integrated. Signing up black teachers for such classrooms, no matter what their qualifications, like the Tower of Babel soaring up toward the heavens, would have raised black professional aspirations while at the same time dooming the same professors, and anyone associated with them, to ruin.[9]

A second site of contention appeared between leaders in the black American National Baptist Convention (ANBC) and the New England–based American Baptist Publishing Society (ABPS). In 1889 Rev. E. K. Love—who pastored Savannah's First African Baptist Church—and other southern black denominational leaders found themselves professionally isolated. Theirs was the first generation of black Baptists to receive formal theological training, and it now seemed as though their educational accomplishments kept them in a perpetual search for professional recognition. They wanted equal opportunities to contribute to the ABPS's publications, which were distributed in black and white Baptist churches and conventions throughout the country. Through the ANBC they proposed forming an alliance with the ABPS, an arrangement, they argued, that would benefit both groups: the ANBC would

foster black support and expand the ABPS's constituency (including membership dues), and in exchange the society would invite more black Baptists to be writers and agents. The ABPS agreed. Underestimating the Southern Baptist Convention's resistance to racial tolerance, even when it was self-serving, the Publishing Society invited Love, already an agent for the ABPS, and two of his colleagues to join the contributor's list of its flagship publication, *Baptist Teacher*. Love's first contribution was to be entitled "Regeneration," but the only evidence on that score was the regeneration of the SBC's old prejudices. The SBC began in 1845 when southern white Baptists from ten states and the District of Columbia, deeply committed to slavery, clashed with the ABHMS over whether slaveholders could be appointed missionaries. Years after the end of slavery the SBC threatened to secede from the American Baptist Publishing Society if it included articles penned by black scholars in its main publication, and the financially strapped ABPS reneged on its invitation and offered to publish the black contributors' articles as "tracts" separate from the *Baptist Teacher*. Love and the other ANBC leaders, feeling betrayed, rejected the proposal on the grounds that it represented continued marginalization and a denigration of their achievements and abilities. Several years later these same men would launch a successful movement to establish a black publishing house.[10]

This episode stirred Love and many of his colleagues to engage in a new style of denominational activism. Love was enormously popular among Georgia's black Baptists, but no amount of acclaim could mitigate the tensions that arose among different factions. In the absence of synods and presbyteries Baptists were legendary for breaking away from other Baptists for all kinds of reasons. Churches multiplied this way, as did Baptist conventions. Just as the Southern Baptist Convention began as a breakaway movement from the American Baptists over the issue of slavery, Georgia's black Baptists were teetering on the brink of a similarly explosive rupture. The discord over relationships with white philanthropists and meaningful participation of Afro-Georgians in ABHMS schools was so rife that in 1893, the same year black Baptists began a movement to establish their own publishing house, Love led a faction out of the black Missionary Baptist Convention of Georgia and began a rival organization—the General Missionary Baptist Convention (GMBC)—with the goal of organizing a college of their own that would equal Atlanta Baptist College and Spelman Seminary. With sermonic hyperbole, a well-worn tool of the preacher's trade, one Baptist minister who remained with the original convention recalled the rupture five years later. It was "the greatest of all combats," he wrote. "The earth shook, the horizon was dark-

ened, the denomination was convulsed, life long friends fell out; and the prosperity of Zion was paralyzed."[11]

Even with its faithful core of support among southern black Baptists, the American Baptist Home Missionary Society was anything but sanguine after the split. Anxious about additional conversions to the dissident camp, the ABHMS's chief concern was that the growing black movement for independence would dampen northern white support for southern black education. If white people from both regions united against the ABHMS, the whole project of southern black education would be doomed. In 1894 the secretary of the Missionary Society, Thomas J. Morgan, a former abolitionist and commander of black troops in the Civil War, was confronted by angry black critics demanding an explanation for why his organization failed to relinquish its thirteen colleges and academies to black control. Seeking to conciliate those who sought autonomy and strengthen the position of those who stayed, he devised a way to share more control of the schools with local black leaders. He proposed that the ABHMS join forces with black Baptists in Georgia (and in other states where black Baptists were dividing over the same issues) and form a Negro Education Society (NES). The new society would include members of the two rival state Baptist organizations and would work with the ABHMS on devising and implementing policy decisions. The NES promised black Georgians more influence in directing the affairs of Atlanta Baptist College and Spelman Seminary by inviting "four prominent Negro Baptists" to serve on the boards of trustees, including William Jefferson White, the civil rights activist and publisher of *The Georgia Baptist.* Both black conventions from Georgia accepted Morgan's proposal. The ABHMS hired a few more black teachers, yet nearly one-third of the total were paid salaries by black state conventions. This strategy ameliorated tensions and weakened black leaders' demands for more control in educational institutions, but only temporarily.[12]

As was the case with the earlier struggle between the American Baptist Publishing Society and black Baptists, Morgan and other ABHMS officials resisted equal participation and a genuine sharing of decision-making power. School policy, it turned out, was initiated not by local trustees, black or white, but from ABHMS headquarters in New York City. To some, the society's proposition was nothing more than appeasement, and they restated their vow to start their own school if their demands for more involvement in decision making were not met. Morgan said that while the perseverance of Love and his supporters was "laudable," he rejected their demands on the grounds that black southerners, as a result of centuries of restrictions and prohibitions and inferior training, simply did not have adequate management expertise.[13]

Love and his supporters could not help but regard Morgan and his colleagues as supercilious and paternalistic. Anger over black token representation and subordinate positions on the schools' boards of directors could only have deepened when Morgan issued statements, one more unctuous than the last, about black Baptists' plans to compete with the ABHMS schools in Georgia. In a letter that White ran on the front page of *The Georgia Baptist*, Morgan wrote, "The Officers of the Society respect the manhood of Negroes, and give to them full liberty to do what they think is for the best welfare of their people."[14] Morgan's message linking black manhood and white approval could only have further alienated Love and his associates, and the suggestion that the ABHMS had the moral authority to impel freedom on another people who, in this case, were living under a different social system with ever-increasing restrictions was unlikely to do anything to reduce the mounting tensions. What William J. White and the other black ABHMS supporters made of Morgan's stance was not a matter of public record, but one imagines they might have bristled, too. White, like Love, was a proud black man and not one to wear a muzzle when he came face to face with racial chauvinism. But he was also politic—shrewd, in fact, as he sought to extract the greatest advantage for his people without pushing away white men with money. Temperamentally Love and White could not have been more different. While their personalities matched their programmatic approaches to uplift and racial progress, philosophically both were Black Christian Nationalists, fully devoted to racial progress, self-help, and uplift.

Black Nationalism at the Turn of the Twentieth Century

Addressing the newly formed National Baptist Convention (the nationwide body representing black Baptist churches) in 1896, Rev. E. K. Love, now president of Georgia's dissident General Missionary Baptist Convention, deployed a separatist-nationalist discourse when he declared: "We can better marshal our forces and develop our people in enterprises shaped by us. Negro brain should shape and control Negro thought." Though Love seemed to be subscribing to a notion of an inherent "black mind" that would have broad intellectual and social ramifications given the opportunity, his concerns were far more prosaic; he wanted black Baptists to govern the society's schools, to make all decisions with regard to hiring and promotions. He shared with northern missionaries a belief that classical education for black Americans was a means to achieve racial equality in civil and political life. Love, a graduate of Atlanta Baptist's forerunner, Augusta Institute, in the 1870s, and previously pastor of one of the country's oldest and most renowned black Baptist churches (First African in Savannah), was a peerless example of a black leader

educated with aspirations to achieve in a society that was uniformly hostile to black ambition. Love's attraction to separatist nationalism deepened as the new century approached. The idea of going it alone, not enthralled by powerful and patronizing white philanthropists, could only have been reinforced when the ABPS marginalized and excluded him, and the ABHMS continued to subordinate educated black Baptists.[15]

Faith in separatist nationalism was less a pure matter of conscience than a practical response to the reality of exclusion. While present-day readings of Black Nationalism emphasize an identity-driven constructed ideology that promotes the idea that special political behavior flows from epistemological psychic transformation—from inferior American to positive identification with "black-ness" and ancestral homeland—this is a relatively recent phenomenon.[16] The Black Nationalism that embraces pride in cultural "Africanness" has not been a permanent fixture of black nationalist life or separatist intellectual thought. Afro-centrist revolutionary nationalism tailgated the beginning of Africa's successful political movements to gain freedom from colonialism and accompanied the end of the first phase of the postwar civil rights movement in the United States. While owing a philosophical debt to earlier forms of nationalism, the Black Nationalism that emerged during the civil rights era was uniquely opposed to integration and assimilation. Black Nationalism in the early twentieth century was part of a strategy to become accepted and respected by white Americans.

The separatist Baptists in Georgia at the turn of the twentieth century channeled their beliefs and aspirations for "Negro improvement" into their own institutions that would "civilize" the children of Africa. Paradoxical though it may seem, writes the historian William Jeremiah Moses, "some of the foremost geographical separatists and political nationalists were cultural assimilationists." Paradoxical maybe, but it helps explain why Black Christian Nationalists developed arguments that seemed markedly similar to those the United States made for its interventions in the Philippines, Haiti, Hawaii, and Puerto Rico during the same period, much of which incorporated some of the language of uplift. President William McKinley described his imperial project in the Philippines as "benevolent assimilation," and he viewed imperialism more generally as a "moral imperative" to inspire conformity. Like the "uncivilized" children of Africa, Filipinos were "Orphans," cut off from their fathers, in need of adoption and guidance and protection. It mattered little whether black nationalists advocated emigration to Africa, as Marcus Garvey did by revitalizing the nineteenth-century African Civilization movement with his Universal Negro Improvement Association, or emphasized economic viability at the expense of social and political equal-

ity, as Booker T. Washington did in his "cast down your buckets" speech. Neither of these leaders came close to celebrating anything remotely associated with "black culture," either of the highbrow or lowbrow variety. Still, Georgia's black Baptists, including those who joined the dissident GMBC with the goal of organizing an independent school and those who rallied behind the ABHMS, while obliged to Booker T. Washington philosophically, also found common ground with aspects of the nineteenth-century emigrationist Alexander Crummell and his intellectual progeny, Marcus Garvey.[17]

The conflicts between white Baptist philanthropists from New England and the two groups of black Baptists in Georgia over black education have been depicted by some as a clear-cut case of racist white northerners working with moderate, mild-mannered proponents of civil rights and racial integration while radical leftwing militants maintained a heroic and principled stance. This division of black Baptists reduces the story's complexity to a reflexive, conceptual oversimplification that in the end reveals little about the various characterizations of dissent. Civil rights nationalists and separatist-nationalists did not agree on strategy, but they shared a common dissatisfaction with "moderate" approaches to reform that seemed always to leave the status quo intact. Black Baptists who did not support the movement to establish an independent school referred to themselves as "cooperationists," denoting their continuing efforts to work with the ABHMS, and historians assigned the moniker "separatists" to those who supported the impending split. At least one scholar has gone so far as to push the division between radicals and moderates to correspond to skin color, even implying that William Jefferson White "proved himself more than equal to defending the cooperationist line in the columns of his newspaper," *The Georgia Baptist,* because he was the "mulatto" son of a white planter and black and Indian slave.[18] Rev. E. K. Love, it follows according to this logic, was a militant separatist who would lead the General Missionary Baptist Association's efforts to organize Central City College because, as the product of two black slaves and born into slavery himself, he had an appetite for revolution.

This interpretation of the White/Love division exposes the theoretical narrowness of reducing philosophies and debates among black Americans to what the political scientist Adolph Reed calls "sets of strategic or tactical dualisms." As narrow as this approach is, it has broad implications: it reifies the customary American consensus that barred black Americans from an accepted understanding of who is and who can be an American. A subtle but perilous undertaking, this is achieved by casting black thought and action exclusively within a "race relations management" frame, effectively diluting and condensing the human complexity of black American-ness to white

opinion and responses. For example, the blue-eyed, "racially indeterminate" William J. White favored black Baptist cooperation with the northern white philanthropists in the black denominational schools, not because of the status of his parents or the color of his skin. Light-skinned he was, but to attribute White's political stances thus requires using evidence to prop up argument rather than to deepen our understanding of the fissures between Love and White and the competing groups of black Baptist leaders. White believed eschewing all help from the white philanthropists was an exaggerated response to the New Englanders' paternalism and that in the end it would do little to salve southern black Baptists' slighted feelings. Besides that, rejecting their assistance, no matter how imperfect it was, lacked much-needed pragmatism. "Shall we cooperate with our white brethren and thus get the benefit of their wisdom and wealth?" White asked in 1898. "Or shall we foolishly say no, and remain in ignorance and weakness?" The same William Jefferson White, who broke the law during slave times, became one of Booker T. Washington's many adversaries after the beginning of the twentieth century. He was also run out of Augusta for speaking out in support of racial egalitarianism. He favored "co-operation with our white brethren," not because he was conservative or even toadying to racist paternalists, but in order to "secure assistance for our hundreds of young men and women who desire an education, but are not able to get it unless they get help."[19]

White's main concern was that a truly independent black college would fail because neither black state Baptist convention could support such an operation financially, and it would fail to attain adequate philanthropic support. No stranger to institutional financial operations including the parameters of philanthropic giving, White not only managed to keep his widely read newspaper in business during the hard recession of the 1890s, but he also started the Augusta Baptist Institute during the first flush of black freedom, a school for freedmen and women that turned out to have remarkable staying power. Atlanta Baptist was the forerunner to the ABHMS-supported Atlanta Baptist College, itself the precursor to Morehouse College. "[O]ur brethren must not forget," he wrote presciently not long before the separatist-inspired school opened its doors, "that in the matter of maintaining a college that must have large sums of money every year, the purchase of ground and erection of buildings is the easiest part of the task." Meeting the monthly expenses including payroll, textbooks, and supplies was likely to present a substantial challenge.[20]

E. K. Love, angry and determined, did not heed White's counsel. As the independent denominational school became imminent, White's editorials verged on the shrill. An angry column in early 1899 entitled "Blind Lead-

ers of the Blind," questioned the veracity of men like Love who "pretend to be fighting the battle of race manhood in opposing co-operation with white people," but "in this way they deceive many." ABHMS schools, argued White, were good enough for those who led the fight against the ABHMS but not for those whose children were now going to school. Pointing to the irony of it all, and what White regarded as a double standard—the better school for the parents and another one for the children—he wryly observed that "whatever education the leaders against co-operation in Georgia have they got through the cooperative work of the American Baptist Home Missionary Society." And in a sly dig at E. K. Love, who was a native of Perry County near Marion, Alabama, and who attended Atlanta Baptist, he added, "Some of these men came to Georgia from other states and notably from Alabama to get the benefit of co-operative schools in Georgia."[21]

White was not in principle opposed to black Baptists taking initiatives and operating independently from the New Englanders who ran the Mission Society. After *The "Georgia Baptist* man" paid a visit to the new black Baptist publishers in Nashville on his way home from the National Baptist Convention in 1898, White said that he "favor[ed] the establishment of a publishing house by the colored Baptists of the country," for "a man who is known to be able to take care of himself is largely respected because of this fact." White found extending "the color line into the avenues of business" acceptable as well, and his support for "churches especially for colored people," while contrary to his proclivity to "hate . . . every law and custom that draws distinctions between the people of the United States because of a difference in the color of their skin," was a legitimate response to the prevailing state of affairs. "Colored Christians," he wrote, "in all parts of the United States find it more pleasant to have churches for themselves, because white church members find so many ways to make it unpleasant for colored Christians who go among them." White even found favor with E. K. Love's departure from the state Baptist Convention in 1893 on the grounds that the new organization would be an additional wellspring from which experienced black leaders would emerge.[22]

While Love and White disagreed passionately over what ought to have been the best approach to white northern philanthropists in black education, each man supported the principle of education as a means of attaining racial equality and individual accomplishment. Neither advocated an independent state or government, but as black nationalists, both men worked to create institutions that historically have been the infrastructures of modern nations—schools, business, newspapers, and churches. Love and White were Black Christian Nationalists, in that their search for earthly redemption was sacred

and secular, and it had implications for both. Like most other Black Nationalist debates throughout America's history, the arguments between Love and White rarely if ever engaged most black southerners because the institutions at stake were modern ones dominated by and for the most privileged. As the historian Judith Stein observes in her study of Marcus Garvey, "Nationalist solutions to the problem of racial exclusion were the products of . . . class experiences, and they were best suited to remedying elite ills." Working-class black parents were most likely unaware of conflicts between elite black Baptists on educational matters. They believed that white teachers were better qualified than black teachers, and hence they were not only willing to accept white teachers but sought them out. When the American Missionary Association appointed black teachers for the lower grades of Straight University (the precursor to Dillard) in New Orleans, parents complained that there was no advantage to sending their children to Straight since they could go to public schools where black teachers were hired to teach black students.[23] Black teachers and administrators and Baptist leaders who wanted to control their own institutions and their professional development—and expand as a class—were understandably frustrated with white philanthropists. Their frustrations reflected an accurate assessment of their future as professionals.

Central City College

In 1899 Georgia's General Missionary Baptist Convention acquired 235 acres in the middle of the state's Black Belt, "just beyond" the Ocmulgee River and the city of Macon, on which to establish an independent black denominational school.[24] They called the school Central City College, and despite its name, it existed as a marginal primary and secondary school for a little more than three decades, eking out the barest survival mostly from church missionary offerings. Its major accomplishment was an articulation of black autonomy and self-help, group pride and dignity—and a rejection of the paternalism that often accompanied philanthropic giving. The school's president and local board of trustees were not required to receive clearance from donors in distant cities for management decisions. Graduates of the school would rival in education and training for leadership the best and the brightest from the ABHMS schools. While begun under less than auspicious circumstances, Central City represented the highest aspirations of the race. Love and his cofounders shared the noblest of goals: the training of teachers and preachers who would lead black Americans to the Promised Land through Christian education, classical literary training, and industrial training.

Those who rallied behind Central City College did not have a distinctly black education agenda; their most consistent demand was that their educa-

tion be the same as everybody else's. The school's first president, William E. Holmes, resigned his post at Atlanta Baptist College in 1899 to assume his new position after spending more than twenty-five years teaching at the ABHMS-supported institution and serving as right-hand man to four presidents. Born into slavery, Holmes had earned a master's degree from the University of Chicago. He had been with the school almost since its inception in the church basement of Springfield Baptist in Augusta, and for years after the school moved to Atlanta he was the only black faculty. Holmes left Atlanta not because of any philosophical difference between a New England–style of pedagogy and a southern black or Afro-centrist approach, but because of a smoldering resentment at having been marginalized on the periphery of decision-making power long after he had paid his dues. The historian Leroy Davis writes that Holmes had good reason to expect to be appointed president of ABC in 1890, not only because of his long years of service but because of his fidelity to the cause, which he demonstrated the year the black state Missionary Baptist Convention devised a plot to win control over Atlanta Baptist College and Spelman Seminary from the ABHMS if their demands for more influence in the governing of the schools were not met. That was in 1887, and Holmes, then corresponding secretary of the Baptist Convention and privy to the plan, notified ABHMS secretary H. L. Morehouse. Three years later when the ABHMS passed over him during a search for president and hired George Sale, a white Baptist minister from Canada, Holmes began to question whether he had any chance for promotion in the missionary school. He supported ABC's recruitment of his friend John Hope from Roger Williams University in Nashville in 1897 and regarded the new young professor, now the second African American on faculty, as an ally in his quest for the presidency. He was quickly disappointed, however, when Hope would not take sides. Around that time black Baptist insurgents began to draw the ambitious Holmes into their orbit.[25] It seems reasonable to assume that had Holmes become ABC's first black president (a distinction held by John Hope in 1906), he would have remained at ABC, compelling the point that nationalist leaders were not trying to revolutionize the educational system but to achieve greater participation in it as teachers, administrators, presidents, and trustees.

Holmes's departure from Atlanta Baptist occurred not as a straightforward administrative matter, an employee resigning one position to take another: but driven by feelings of anger and betrayal, his exit became messy and publicly acrimonious. Several weeks before Central City was to open its doors, a college president was yet to be appointed. President Sale heard Holmes's name bandied about as a candidate. Sale wrote to Holmes and asked him to

state in writing whether he would accept the position. Holmes promised to honor his contract with ABC, saying that he would "inform members of the Board of the Negro College" that he "held the commission of the Home Society," and he was duty-bound to "teach it out." Weeks later Sale demanded that Holmes take a public stand against the school. "I have no word to say against the proposed college at Macon," wrote Sale, "but the spirit in which the movement to establish that college was born, and its attitude toward the work of the Home Mission Society are such that a man cannot be wholly in sympathy with both. I must therefore ask of you an unequivocal statement of your position." Sale was not merely asking whether Holmes planned to remain on faculty at ABC, a reasonable question for the institution's president to put to him, but what was in his heart. To Holmes it was a matter of freedom of conscience. "In view of the fact that my loyalty to the work is questioned," wrote Holmes, "I return my commission and with it tender my resignation to take affect at once." With that Holmes became the first president of Central City College.[26]

As president of the new school, Holmes was well placed to emulate the New England style of liberal arts education, which like its prototype in Atlanta included a healthy measure of instruction in Christianity and a slightly more modest dose of training in practical trades. Booker T. Washington's model of industrial education may have captured the attention of some, but not Georgia's black Baptists who, like many other Americans, regarded a liberal education indispensable to creating strong leadership and responsible citizenry. Central City's operation, more modest than its founders intended, included a grammar school, high school, and a three-year theology program for men. Rev. James M. Nabrit, the only other faculty besides Holmes with a college degree—a bachelor's degree from Atlanta Baptist College—taught classical languages, science, and mathematics. The first six years of grammar school emphasized reading, grammar, mathematics, geography, and "vertical penmanship"; in the seventh year history was introduced. The "Academic Course," which comprised four years of study, included "Our History," "Lectures on England," advanced mathematics (algebra and plane geometry), English, Latin, and Greek, and various sciences, which according to Central City's taxonomy and contemporary practice included bookkeeping alongside courses in physiology (biology) and physics.[27]

The single area of academic distinction between the sexes at Central City was in theological studies, which Baptists understood as a strictly male province. Men were in training to be preachers, historically the most widely respected vocation available to a black man. "Through the Young Men's Ministerial Union," read *The Georgia Baptist* in the early 1930s, "one of the students

preach a sermon to the student body of young men every Friday night." The young ministers in training ran Wednesday evening services, always a "soul stirring prayer meeting," and after every Sunday morning Sunday school session and on Sunday evenings they ran a "splendid B.Y.P.U [Baptist Young People's Union]." Limited resources for black-owned schools paradoxically translated into a more egalitarian approach to education for men and women. Private schools for white students were never coeducational, and curricula in the resulting schools for men and women were strictly divided according to sex. As the historian Glenda Gilmore writes, "Exclusion of women from white men's colleges meant more than separation from men; it also generally meant exclusion from classical education." Central City College, while aspiring to its appellation for its first decade in operation, and then off and on during the rest of its brief history, functioned as a grammar and secondary school; but what it offered its female students compared to white female private school students was in fact quite advanced. There was no such thing as a women pastor or preacher in the Baptist denomination, or any other major denomination during the period. Typically, those men who were not in training for the ministry were looking at careers as teachers. Black women were preparing to become teachers as well, while their white counterparts were in training to become wives of the rising bourgeoisie. They studied subjects that were fitting to their imminent station as proper members of the upper class: art, music, a taste of literature, and "ornamental" languages, especially French.[28]

Holmes expected more than a few of his students from Atlanta to follow him to Macon, but that never came to pass. With few extant school records, explanations for these frustrated hopes are a matter of conjecture. It seems reasonable to assume that between the two schools Atlanta Baptist College, with its ABHMS backing and professors with college degrees, seemed like the better prospect. Central City, with its sparse facility—"an old two story brick structure, two wooden structures—all of which are too dilapidated and inadequate for the accommodation" of its students and with teachers lacking college degrees, came in a very poor second. Given a choice between an ABHMS–sponsored school and the independent black Central City College, choosing the latter would have seemed more like making a political point than going to school. Getting accepted to Atlanta Baptist, or any of the missionary-backed schools (without question, along with the AMA institutions, the best schools for black students in the South) and having the finances to pay tuition, no matter how modest it was, would have been like winning the lottery in a world so bereft of places for intellectual nourishment. Like E. K. Love, William E. Holmes, and the other founders of Central City

who were graduates of missionary-supported schools, those students who chose to stay were demonstrating their edifying desire to escape the dead end of being cotton pickers and river dredgers. The choice, moreover, when there was one, between attending independent or missionary-supported schools—and the disagreements between cooperationist and separatist Black Christian Nationalists—was one that concerned only the most privileged. The vast majority of black southerners were lucky to attend a year or two of public school, which in those days rarely went beyond the eighth grade.[29]

If the physical plant and academics in Central City could not compete with the non-independent schools, Central City students received "a discipline that tends to develop the student into good moral, Christian characters." This idea of uplift was ubiquitous among both groups of nationalists. Student life at Central City, in keeping with southern black middle-class custom, was strictly regimented. All of the school's activities were designed to "promote good breeding in morals and manners." Students were required to attend daily chapel services, which were run by faculty members, several of whom were ordained ministers. Christian discipline and morals and manners, and Bible instruction and even lessons in the Golden Rule, all added up to learning and personal achievement, and the hope and possibility for future advancement, individually and for "the race." At least as important as Greek and Latin and biology and history was the substantiation of Christianity. During the summer months as many of the young women fanned out across the state to teach in rural schools, the young ministers-in-training were "used by the pastors throughout the state in assisting them in their church and Sunday School and B.Y.P.U. work." Students were both teachers and missionaries, and like Spelman and Atlanta Baptist students, many spent their summer months in rural communities spreading the Gospel and the *abc*'s, and instructing the poor and uneducated in personal hygiene, temperance, punctuality, thrift, and hard work. By the early 1930s students had organized local chapters of the YMCA, YWCA, and the Woman's Christian Temperance Union in Macon. Always on the lookout for opportunities to uplift the race, the Central City College community—the president, faculty, and students—"offered to any organization to push in any way possible the great work of the denomination throughout the state." To that end, they conducted Bible Institutes and "other programs" that supported the GMBC's state work.[30]

If Central City College leaders rejected the Hampton-Tuskegee model of industrial education, they held to the New England Puritan doctrine of the dignity of labor. They believed, along with other black Baptists, that to undertake hard work advanced self-respect and individual and group pride. Nannie Burroughs, the leader of the Woman's Convention of the National

Baptist Convention, Inc., said at a convention meeting in 1905, "We do ourselves honor when we have associated with us in our religious life women who think it is a disgrace not to toil rather than look down in disdain upon a woman because she has character enough to work for an honest living." It does "not require very much character nor brains to scorn labor," she added, "but it requires a great deal of both in this day of false pride to earn your bread by sweating for it and holding up your head above public sentiment, feeling in your heart that you are a servant, yet you are a queen."[31]

Far from learning to disdain manual labor or regard it as a mark of inferiority, each Central City student contributed to the material sustenance of the school for at least an hour a day. The school ran a printing department that produced the *Baptist Truth*, the organ of the dissident General Missionary Baptist Convention, convention minutes and pamphlets, and reports written by E. K. Love and his associates. Male and female students ran the printing shop, generating income for the school by taking on commercial jobs.[32] The school had fifty acres of land for cultivation, and the young scholars pitched in and grew foodstuffs for their school community. "If it were not for the industrious habits of the students and their willingness to cooperate . . . in pushing the work of the college," read *The Georgia Baptist* during the Great Depression in 1931, "it would be impossible to operate the institution during these strenuous times." Indeed, the summer before those words appeared ten young men stayed on campus to work on the farm and in the garden and to look after the dairy, the hogs, the chickens, and the stock. "Through the efforts of these young men (most of whom were young preachers)," their yield that year included 300 bushels of corn, 3 tons of velvet beans, 2 tons of peanuts, 9 acres of "O-too-tan beans," a ton of oats and another of "vetch" (legumes), 8 acres of sugar cane, 50 bushels of table peas, and 100 bushels of sweet potatoes. They also raised 28 hogs, 50 grown chickens, and 3 calves. Whatever the school community did not need for its own subsistence, students sold at market for the school.[33] Not only did working for the sustenance of the denomination, the school, and the members of its community give the students the sense that the school belonged to them, but their hard work was the most practical engagement in the political work of nation building.

Gender and Black Christian Nationalism

In 1915, the year Booker T. Washington died and the Ku Klux Klan was resurrected, the two state Baptist conventions in Georgia reunited, and the General Missionary Baptist Convention became the sole state association representing black Baptists. The Woman's Convention of the now united

GMBC undertook to lead the GMBC and the state's black Baptists in support of Central City College. For these women, many of whom hailed from Savannah and were active in the voter registration efforts following the ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment (detailed in chapter 3), the idea of nation building intersected with ideas about respectability and racial uplift, particularly in the equation of race progress and patriarchal authority. The success of Central City College, they reasoned, like black women's success at the ballot box, would help men reestablish their natural roles as protectors and providers for their women and the race. This was connected to a conservative tradition of black social thought that was molded by the normative values of American society at large. Taken together, the women's statements and actions can be read as a portrayal of the complex strands of a political consciousness that included elements of public and private virtue. Black women who were active in the Woman's Convention were advancing a theory and practice of group self-help, and where their objective was for autonomy, it was not as women but black independence from racialized subjugation and subservience, with the lasting goal of achieving citizenship—for their men.

As providers of religious and philanthropic services, the Woman's Convention was heir to some two hundred years of proto-political voluntary action, the seeds of which Alexis de Tocqueville observed during his travels through the United States in the early 1830s. Although the variety and vigor of women's voluntary associations escaped Tocqueville's attention entirely, since the early days of the Republic women had discovered ways to create a political context in which private female virtue might comfortably exist with the civic virtue that had been regarded as the cement of civil society. In an effort to inspire and mobilize her listeners in support of Central City College, Mrs. S. J. Fluker, president of the Woman's Convention of the GMBC in the early 1920s, rehearsed the triumphs that resulted from the intermingling of the public and private in the abolitionist movement, "which ultimately terminated in liberating the Sable son of Ham" and winning suffrage for women. Reminiscent of the same ideals that paired public and private and women and men in the earliest phase of nation building in American history, in which the Republican Mother assumed stewardship of "civic morality" and integrated political virtue into domestic life, Fluker explained how she saw this enduring relationship. "The wisest and greatest men of all ages," she said, in "Ancient, Mideaval [*sic*] and Modern times, got their start and inspiration at their Mother's knees." The Virgin Mary, "that virtuous mother," who gave the "miracle" of Jesus to the world, bequeathed to Georgia's black Baptist mothers the mantle of righteous civic morality. "To you, who are Mothers,"

said Fluker, "much depend on you, or I would state that a great deal is expected of us to help in the furtherance of the plan of Salvation by giving more attention to our children in the solemn duty of religious training."[34]

Blending nineteenth-century tradition with twentieth-century modern, Fluker seemed to veer toward modern bourgeois feminism, glossing over racial and even political objectives when she said, it "is creditable to make mention" that Georgia was the first state to send a woman to the United States Senate. Although she never mentioned the white supremacist advocate of lynching, Rebecca Latimer Felton, by name, her identity-driven support of Felton was not accompanied by the promotion of women's independence and self-sufficiency at the expense of community ideal. Like other black middle-class Christians, she believed in the dual principle of manhood and motherhood as the ticket to black freedom, a conviction that was at odds with modernist ideologies of radical bourgeois competitive individualism and that went hand in hand with free market capitalism: and led inexorably to the individualist political formulation that made every man equal before the law. In a world where every black man—and by extension woman—was unequal before the law, Fluker's rhetorical commitment to prescribed and predetermined gender conventions was central to the foundational ideas of Black Christian Nationalism—communal self-improvement, patriarchy, and group progress. "God took from man's side a rib out of which woman was formed," argued Fluker. Womanhood leads inevitably to motherhood, the propagation of the "human family," and that "pleases God." It would be difficult to imagine Susan B. Anthony, or any of the white mothers of the woman's movement in the Civil War generation speaking such words. Black nationalists' understanding of the sexes having immutable and fixed roles was in some measure a response to personal experiences of sexualized racism. Where the idea (and all too frequently the life) of the father as protector and provider was jeopardized, motherhood provided the sturdiest mooring; and it became a matter of survival to attach importance to black motherhood and the black family. "[K]nowing this as I do," said Fluker referring to Adam's rib, "I've been more deeply impressed than ever that God meant for women to work and act side by side of men in the great campaign of human uplifting and for advancement of the Master's causes on earth." This patriarchal notion of public womanhood celebrated personal feminine virtue as a way to promote social order from the domestic sphere. "[W]e women can rightfully boast of the fact that the Pious Babe in Bethlehem, the Rose of Sharon, and the Lily of the Valley was given to the world by a woman."[35]

The idea that motherhood determined the course of civilization was not a novel one. Few times in history have women been celebrated as warriors

and stateswomen, and when they appeared as such, they were considered so out of the ordinary as to verge on the eccentric. Rev. D. D. Crawford, secretary of the GMBC, wrote that women "cannot occupy a man's sphere without becoming manish [*sic*], bold and immodest." Women, he added, needed a "brace" that only men could supply, and once they were propped up "and their course mapped out, they form one of the strongest safeguards society has ever had." Fluker would not have found much to disagree with on that score. While the spheres were to remain separate, she reasoned, men could not achieve their masculine missions, including their "inventions . . . science, [and] philosophy," single-handedly. Behind every great man, in other words, was a supportive, nurturing woman.[36]

Alongside this time-honored understanding of the relationship between women and men, black Baptists constructed powerful symbolic representations of matrifocal social orders that placed the ideal of motherhood at the helm of their sacred social structures. In the context of women's exclusion from church leadership and governance, black Baptists paid homage to not only black women but also the ideal of family, referring to their churches as "Mother Zion," always denoting comfort and security. The ideal of Republican Motherhood, while embedded in Western thought, also resonated with West African kinship structures. As tempting as it is to ascribe to the appellation "Mother Zion" a notion of wise, spiritual, and even independent womanhood stretching between centuries and across miles, and ignoring three hundred years of history on American soil, as indeed some have done, it explains little about what the designation meant. "Mother Zion," at the very least, was a commanding counter-image to white propaganda regarding black womanhood that produced misguided representations, the "promiscuous, Jezebel," and the like. The principle of Mother Zion found a human corollary with the "Mother of the Church," a venerated elder who was sought out for spiritual wisdom and guidance. Although the ideals and practices of Mother Zion and the Mother of the Church had no equivalent in white Baptist churches, to conclude a linear African telos is misleading. The idea of women in slavery as bearers of culture, while syncretic with free African traditions, was organic to life in the United States.[37]

If black nationalists' discourse on gender and race consciousness was separate from Afro-centric spiritual strivings and cultural connection, it established Western Christian civilization at the most advanced end of the spectrum of human development. As civilizationalists, nationalists embraced Negro improvement, race progress, and racial uplift, and this may have developed from African Americans' awareness of the differences between the measured traditionalism that guided African societies and motorized self-

confident, modern Anglo-Saxon culture. Mrs. Della M. Gadson, vice president at large of the Woman's Convention in 1930, outlined a strategic connection between the supremacy of Western civilization and black liberation in her push for Central City College in an article for *The Georgia Baptist* entitled "The Progressive March of the Negro." Gadson taught history at Central City and was the wife of the school's second president, J. H. Gadson; like the school's founders and elite supporters, she believed the black-run schools that followed the successful New England model would assist black southerners who were "striving to cast off [their] yokes of superstition, ignorance and poverty" and "lift the race from a lowly level to a place of respect and honor." Only then would they demonstrate "to the whole civilized world that the blackness of the Negro's skin is no index to the color of his heart, nor the quality of his brain." Forty years later, on the other side of the civil rights movement and in the context of successful struggles against European colonialism and the rise of Black Power movements, the opposite sentiment might have more easily found succor. In an era closer to our own, the darker hue might indeed be key to the force of life and life of mind and thus worth not only remarking on but celebrating. But in the years before all of that transpired, a nationalist separatist could actually make the radical inference that racial differences were measured for ulterior reasons. On the one hand, Gadson accepted the notion of races, each with their own natural characteristic, and on the other, she insisted the meaning of "race" did not express an ideal nature, independent of its existence.[38]

Hovering somewhere in the vicinity where ethnocentrism and civilizationism overlap, Gadson extolled the ability of black Americans to "take on American culture and American customs" as their own, by which she meant those traditions associated with Anglo or northern Euro-Americans. Unlike "all [other] primitive races" that have "been known to immigrate to America," black Africans, she boasted, had been able to "make complete adaptation to American ideas and ideals" because more than anyone else, "the Negro" cared about "advancement" and "progress." "It is said by reliable authorities," continued Gadson, "that the Indian, even with a college education, will often go back to Indian reservations out west, pull off his American clothes, garb himself in his aboriginal costume or blanket, war-paint and feathers. He throws his Greek and Latin to the winds and becomes again a pagan." The inability to adapt to "western civilization," she added, "is true not only [of] the Indian, but of most all primitive races." This view of the American Indian (not to mention the inference that the Indian—and Africans and Europeans—were comparable immigrants in America) was a wily statement of assimilation and what Moses has termed in describing another context, "Anglo-African chau-

vinism." Sharing white Protestant Americans' xenophobic fears of Catholics and Jews, Gadson held that recent immigrants to the United States had only a "selfish mercenary interest in our country."[39]

While a desire to assimilate was one of the driving forces behind nationalism, it was not born solely of a spirit of African American conformity to Anglo-American values. Mrs. M. S. Grant, president of the Woman's Convention in 1921, expressed the most common religious form of black African chauvinism in her "State of the Country" address at the annual GMBC meeting. Pointing to the spiritual bankruptcy of white Christianity, which led to "lynchings and Ku Klux Klan operations," she instructed her listeners to "remember that promise made in the Bible that 'Ethiopia shall stretch forth her hand unto God; then shall come princes out of Egypt.'" This passage, taken from Psalm 68:31, is the most widely quoted verse in African American religious history and has been open to a wide range of exegetical interpretations, ranging from general expressions of black peoples' spiritual yearnings to the cornerstone of missionary emigrationism. No matter what the object lesson of a particular reading, each linked the present with a mythic past, in much the same way white Americans' claims of descent from Greco-Roman civilization linked their present with imagined history. For the present it gave meaning to black peoples' suffering and prophesized of possibility and hope for the future. This was, as Moses suggests, "a cyclical view of history," a proposal that "the idea that the ascendancy of the white race was only temporary, and that the divine providence of history was working to elevate the African peoples." Grant used the biblical passage to offer a universal spiritual message. Ethiopianism became a metaphor for, in her words, "a greater and broader view of Christianity" and a "better understanding of moral laws as is given us in our duties to God and our duties to man." A "return to the religion of our forefathers," in short, was African Americans' gift to their country, and its sequel was sure to be the sacred and secular redemption of America, which would involve the elimination of the scourge of race hatred and racial violence.[40]

The Rise of Secular Philanthropy and Raising Money for Central City College

In what had become a uniformly hostile environment for black southerners, a group of northern white philanthropists began to consider a new strategy for the South. Around 1900, Robert Curtis Ogden a wealthy merchant from New York City who preached a gospel of "business idealism" to his own class in the North, began to bring together a new group of benevolent southerners, northern philanthropic leaders, and a few black men from the

tightly controlled ambit dominated by Booker T. Washington to assess the state of educational philanthropy in the South. Northerners included John D. Rockefeller Jr. and the railroad entrepreneur William H. Baldwin, and the southern men included churchmen and a few educational reformers and college presidents from North Carolina, Texas, and Virginia, as well as expatriate southerners like Walter Hines Page and George Foster Peabody. Ogden had long admired General Samuel C. Armstrong, and he served as a trustee on the boards of Hampton and Tuskegee. Ogden and his group questioned the policy of focusing northern philanthropy on the single goal of black education in a climate that was so antagonistic to it. In 1901 they decided that for tactical reasons improved education for black southerners must be tied to improved education for white southerners.[41]

Historians have filled reams with conjectures about the motives of northern philanthropists during Reconstruction and after the South's "Redemption." While some have argued that northern philanthropists capitulated to southern white racism or, even worse, enthusiastically shared the ideology of white supremacy, C. Vann Woodward designates them reformists, "[e]stimable [men] with high collars and fine principles," and while "very much in earnest the changes they envisioned included no basic alteration of social, racial, and economic arrangements." Eric Anderson and Alfred Moss Jr. also argue that the philanthropists were reformers, but unlike Woodward they maintain that the philanthropists were seeking to transform the South, for not only was the existing social order unjust, it was a deadly threat to the security of the nation as a whole. The Ogdenites were relying on a post-abolitionist version of moral suasion. They believed they could mitigate the power of the majority of ignorant extremists by working with a minority of white southerners of goodwill and moderation. Then northern educational reformers could effectively make the majority see that the education of black southerners was in the best interest of all southerners, and the country, too. Appeals to common sense and the benefits of universal education leading to economic growth, they believed, would be more effective than "sentimental" or idealistic arguments based on the rights of man.[42]

The Southern Education Board grew out of the Winston-Salem conference, and an energized young Rockefeller returned to New York on a mission to convince his father to join the new movement. John D. Rockefeller Sr. was no stranger to education for black southerners. It was in honor of his wife, Laura, that Spelman Seminary was named in 1884, after the Rockefellers paid the debt on an old army barracks the school was trying to purchase. The Rockefellers organized the General Education Board in 1902 with a $33 million endowment to disburse for the benefit of universal education in the

South. During its first decade the GEB was devoted to the Progressive ideal of "scientific" and efficiently organized philanthropy, representing a distinctive departure from earlier missionary-based donor groups. It worked closely with the Southern Education Board, which was strictly a propaganda operation that supported regional education policy including voluntary local taxation for better schools, compulsory education, longer school terms, consolidation of weak schools, and universal industrial and agricultural education. Through the GEB the SEB would work with donors, and several members of its board served on the boards of the GEB and other secular foundations that were organized for the express purpose of supporting southern education.[43]

On the question of economic motivation, some scholars, beginning with W. E. B. Du Bois, have argued for a conspiracy theory of the history of black industrial education in the South. In his 1911 novel, *The Quest of the Silver Fleece*, Du Bois depicts a northern cotton speculator who for mercenary reasons becomes involved in philanthropy for black education. In a discussion with a white southern planter the speculator becomes convinced that liberal education will make black southerners "discontented" and ultimately undermine cheap cotton. "Ignorant labor," mused the speculator, while "not ideal," was "worth too much to employers to lose." The speculator formed a "Negro education steering committee" composed of northern philanthropists, financial tycoons, and a few select southerners. The resemblance to the Ogden Movement and the various organizations that emerged from it was, of course, intentional. Du Bois's rendering places Booker T. Washington in collusion with the railway mogul and first chairman of the General Education Board, William H. Baldwin Jr., as well as the Rockefellers and other corporate philanthropists, to profit directly from the promotion of black industrial education.[44]

While Anderson and Moss aver that the Du Bois position posed many of the correct questions about the relationships between white northern philanthropists and southern elites, their take on the philanthropists' motives and tactics stresses southern white opposition to northern reform efforts. Rather than flowing directly from the interests and views of the philanthropists of the industrial Northeast and the up-and-coming businessmen of the New South, it was southern white opposition to northern reform efforts that shaped their strategies. Available evidence, write Anderson and Moss, contradicts a positivistic economic interpretation "at almost every point." Despite Ogden's friendship with Armstrong and his decades-long involvement with Hampton and Tuskegee, the vocational training fad was already fading among philanthropists, including Baldwin. Baldwin, president of the Long Island Railroad with no "important" investments in the South, was opposed

to corporate efforts to eliminate trade unions throughout his business career, and like the other members of the Ogden Movement, Baldwin's interest in education was not, in his own words, "due to a sentimental enthusiasm." Education, said Baldwin, was "essential to the preservation of our form of government," and it therefore made good sense.[45]

This is not to suggest that Baldwin and his GEB were immune to business concerns. But to argue that northern beneficence was in cahoots with southern Democratic Party interests is to overlook basic distinctions separating the two regions. Since the Civil War, the South had trouble attracting investment capital, the result of the national banking system that Republicans organized during secession. With national unification, interest rates went up, short-staple cotton lost its edge on the international market, and a scarcity of regional capital became a perennial problem. Anderson and Moss describe the GEB, with its immense resources and ties to business and political leaders in the North and the South, and various foundations as an "'interlocking directorate' of calculating altruism." But it was their efforts to keep southern white opposition at bay that motivated their strategies, including appointing state supervisors of Negro rural schools who were subordinate to the state superintendents of public instruction and were in turn appointed by local public authorities. The GEB did not recommend black supervisors, and they backed off when they encountered significant opposition to one of their suggestions. The point, according to Anderson and Moss, was to avoid confrontation wherever possible and to address the ubiquitous potential for disagreement by presenting the smallest possible target to southern white critics in order to minimize the possibility of losing the whole program.[46]

For Du Bois, avoiding confrontation with the racist southern white majority was exactly where the rub was. He strongly, and reasonably, dissented from the GEB's position on cooperation. Many scholars have attributed to Thomas Jesse Jones and his 1917 government-sponsored study, *Negro Education*, responsibility for driving northern philanthropy away from liberal black education. Jones was director of research for the Phelps-Stokes Fund and close to Ogden and Rockefeller's GEB, the SEB, the Conference for Education in the South, and the Carnegie Foundation. Before undertaking his study, Jones had served on the prestigious Commission of the Reorganization of Secondary Education, out of which grew the Committee on Social Sciences, which he chaired in 1912. Du Bois attacked the two-volume study in part because he resented a white man with credentials similar to his own occupying a coveted leadership position in black education policy. Du Bois criticized Jones for his failure to denounce the white South's authoritarianism, especially its commitment to denying the vote, and democracy, to half of

its population. "There is not in the whole report a single word about *taxation without representation*," wrote Du Bois. "There is not a single protest against a public school system in which it serves has absolutely no voice, vote, or influences. . . . Until the southern Negro has a vote and representation on school boards public control of his education will mean his spiritual and economic death."[47]

In 1910 the GEB had been around for only eight years, but already it had acquired immense prestige that far exceeded the proportion of contributions it made to black education. Missionary society donations to black southern education that year came to $2 million, a figure that far outstripped the less than $90,000 the GEB contributed. Yet the GEB's planners and theorists set the philanthropic agenda, and missionary philanthropists, far from challenging the "new philanthropy," gradually adopted the GEB's key positions, including the idea that private education for black southerners should be replaced wherever possible by tax-supported public schools. State campaigns for education were to be worked out not by the two boards but within individual states in campaigns planned and led by local people. The SEB contributed literature, advice, the assistance of its agents, and a small subsidy.[48]

Du Bois accused Jones of trying to restrict "the present tendency toward academic and higher education among Negroes" and replacing it with "a larger insistence on manual training, industrial education, and agricultural training." Like the GEB, Jones assumed that the black private schools should be taken over by public school authorities and sustained through local taxes. But he did not advocate turning black colleges into industrial education schools, as Du Bois asserted. About the majority of the schools he visited, Jones wrote, "the college courses . . . have not developed sufficiently according to modern standards." A careful reading of the text suggests what Jones meant by "modern standards" and what he did not. He did not have in mind the modern innovations of industrial education adopted by the prestigious Massachusetts Institute of Technology, which was established in 1861 for elites, or the scientific curricula introduced at Harvard and Yale during the same period, the vocational subjects at Cornell University in 1890, or even the successful passage of the Smith-Lever Act in 1914 or the Smith-Hughes Act in 1917, both of which provided federal aid for agriculture, vocational, and home economics courses. By "modern standards," Jones meant the social and physical sciences. Although economics had been introduced into the curriculum of a few black schools, he wrote, "the study of social conditions has made comparatively little headway," and the vast majority of black colleges did not have even minimally acceptable libraries or laboratories for the study of the physical sciences.[49]

Jones was not proposing that education reform be used as a means of controlling a subordinate caste. Although Jones taught sociology at Hampton Institute beginning in 1903, and he played a critical role in adapting the Hampton-Tuskegee philosophy to Britain's African colonies (as a child he emigrated to the United States from Wales in 1884) before becoming a "Negro expert" in the United States, he did not toady to the Hampton-Tuskegee industrial educational model (for example, he gave Snow Hill Institute, an offshoot of Tuskegee and Hampton and a favorite of white philanthropists, a negative review). Jones wrote, "[w]ith the selection of good teachers" who were well-trained, "striking results might be obtained in the teaching of English, geography and history, as well as the introduction of such subjects as gardening, industrial work, and hygiene." On the subject of history, he affirmed what would one day become known as "social history" on the grounds that students who studied "the record of joy and sorrows, the hopes and disappointments of the masses," rather than "the pleasures and dreams of a few," would accumulate the building blocks of "good citizenship." Far from promoting a caste system in the South where the descendants of slaves were to remain the dregs of society performing those jobs for the "dominant race" that white captains of industry hailing from the North and South considered beneath them, Jones argued that the combination of all these courses at the expense of none "are the adaptations that are being introduced in the school work for white pupils. Surely the Negro schools are equally in need of similar adaptations."[50]

The importance of Jones's study might have been less in the substance of educational reorganization than a conceptual restructuring of education with the goal of effecting absorption of disposed groups into the nation-state. While at Hampton, Jones devised a new approach to social studies drawing on the work of his mentor from Columbia University, Franklin H. Giddings, who said in a 1912 address to the High School Teachers Association: "High school education should make citizens not learners." Jones believed education could lead to social salvation by addressing the specific deficits of target populations, whether they were Jewish immigrants from Eastern Europe, immigrants from Italy, or black Americans still struggling to overcome the mark of slavery. Jones envisaged a social studies for moral regeneration and social uplift rather than for academic excellence. He combined two approaches to reform, one that was shaped during his association with the social gospeler Washington Gladden while studying for his bachelor's degree at Marietta College in Ohio, honed while engaging in settlement and charity work in New York after college, and polished at Union Theological Seminary in New York City, a stronghold of the social gospel, where

he earned his second bachelor's degree, in divinity. From his work with the social gospelers Jones came to grapple with the possibility that souls could be saved through social progress rather than individual redemption. Through his doctoral work in the sociology department at Columbia University, across the street from Union, he acquired a functionalist approach to reform that was concerned with putting the "science " in the study of societies that would result in the ordering and improvement of the conditions of life.[51]

If scholars have not agreed on Jones's position on educational reform, not surprisingly the consequences of the report have not been received with any more unanimity. David Levering Lewis, although not convinced that *Negro Education* was "irresponsible, inaccurate, or negative as DuBois asserted," writes that "there is little doubt that the report's overall impact was to lower the peaks in African American college and professional training and intensify its isolation from the academic mainstream." The "peaks" Lewis refers to were Howard and Fisk universities, the only two institutions according to the study that offered college-level instruction. The rest could not meet the established and agreed-upon standards of the day that were set by the Carnegie Foundation and the North Central Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools. It is difficult to imagine Central City College and the scores of tiny schools like it that were supported by local and state black Baptist associations throughout the South any more isolated from the academic mainstream and northern philanthropic support before the Jones Report appeared. This can only lead to the conclusion that failure to attract foundation assistance after 1917 was not a direct result of the report. Leaving aside the theme of peaks and valleys, Anderson and Moss concluded more optimistically, "[d]espite its unpopularity among black educators, the Jones Report may have helped stimulate the expansion of college education for black Americans." Ten years after *Negro Education* appeared, the number of students in black colleges increased eight-fold, from 1,643 to 13,860. Furthermore, there was evidence that some leaders of black schools took Jones's criticisms seriously and worked to improve the quality of education, suggesting that the report helped to produce constructive change.[52]

If Thomas Jesse Jones was not the architect of inferior education for black Southerners, neither was the General Education Board. Although the board had unprecedented impact, it never achieved its goal, which was to encourage the South to improve its impoverished public education system. The GEB can be charged with naïveté in its belief that it could persuade powerful southern white extremists to abandon their hostility to education for the descendants of slaves while the federal government did nothing, and its callous and sometimes downright insulting responses to Central City College's pleas

for financial support deserve the harshest judgments. But dismissing the GEB as nothing more than conspirators for capitalism misconstrues not only this important Progressive Era institution and its approach to education but also the meaning and substance of national unification following the Civil War and Reconstruction.

Raising Money for Central City College

Garnering financial support for education in the South before the Jones Report appeared was a formidable task, and for Central City College it was well nigh impossible. For years the school struggled, barely getting by on tuition. In 1916 it collected $307 in school fees, which came to less than $5 per student, and contributions from the General Missionary Baptist Association, which, according to its education secretary, C. S. Wilkins, "is composed of poor colored people." Central City president William E. Holmes tried every way he could think of to convince the GEB Board of Trustees that his school was worthy of philanthropic support. He never stopped trying, and as the years dragged on, he became ever more resourceful—and suppliant—but still he never received a penny from the GEB for the school. In 1909 he went to the annual Southern Education Board conference to meet Robert Ogden and Hollis B. Frissell, principal of Hampton and a GEB trustee, "but from neither did I get assistance," wrote Holmes in a letter to Rev. Wallace Buttrick, executive secretary of the GEB two years later. "[O]n the contrary, they thought it doubtful about me getting anything." Holmes availed himself of Booker T. Washington, who was on friendly terms with the GEB leadership, to write a recommendation on behalf of Central City College, which Washington affably did. Then, in an act of manifest desperation, Holmes sent unsolicited to the GEB a list of local white men of standing who would speak on behalf of Central City. The list included Rev. Dr. S. Y. Jameson, president of Mercer University, the Rev. Dr. E. C. Dargan, E. Y. Madary and J. J. Cobb of Macon, and the Hon. W. J. Northern from Atlanta. "Any money your board may give us will be received by the Commercial National Bank, Macon, Ga., and distributed under the direction of these gentlemen," assured Holmes in a letter to Buttrick. Three months later he wrote, "We plead for your assistance and beg not to be turned empty away." But that was exactly how he was turned away, dejected, empty-handed, and, to make matters worse, without explanation. A demoralized Holmes pleaded with Buttrick to tell him "What is the policy of the board? Does it give to Negro colleges where all the trustees are Negroes as is the case here? Does it only give on the condition that the beneficiary shall raise so much?" And in a letter to Ogden reminding him of their earlier meeting in Atlanta, he said,

"At that time you told me I could get nothing, but being in a hurry you did not say why. Will you please tell me what the trouble is?" Neither Ogden nor anybody else wrote back.[53]

When it seemed as though things could not have been more difficult, in late May 1921 a fire, reportedly started "by a colored woman in a fit of insanity," destroyed nearly all the school's buildings, "our Records and nearly everything else we had," wrote Holmes in a letter to E. C. Sage, a member of the GEB's "Committee on Negro Education." This was terrible news for the school (and the historian), but the board of trustees, the black state Baptist Convention, and local black farmers, long accustomed to minor inconveniences and major reversals, did not give up. Farmers' wives from nearby Macon sold beans, cabbage, milk, butterbeans, and corn to raise money for the school. The farmers' yield, along with lumber and gravel, and the lunches local churchwomen sold to city workers raised $164.34. Rev. T. J. Goodall of First African Baptist in Savannah, and a board member of Central City, contributed the princely sum of $50.00 from his own pocket. In the fall of that year the school enrolled 204 students, 38 from "all over the state," and 5 from Alabama and Tennessee. Of the 43 who lived on campus, the girls resided in the president's house and the boys in tents. The remaining 161 students commuted. Mrs. Mary L. Ayers, chair of the Committee on Central City College of the GMBC, reported to the convention, a "large crowd of day students . . . make their way daily to this fire devastated hill and feel no discouragement as they go." The tenacity of Georgia's black Baptists, Central City's students, and the faculty (which since 1915 had doubled, from four to eight) in the face of disaster, limited resources, and continued marginalization in politics seemed never to vanish. Not to be trumped by this setback, they held classes in army tents while the school's leaders figured out how they were going to rebuild.[54]

A few weeks before Christmas that same year, E. C. Sage from the GEB, John Hope, president of what was now called Morehouse College, and Rev. M. W. Reddick, president of the GMBC, visited Central City College. The reason for the visit, according to a report Sage wrote and filed with the GEB, was to placate Holmes, who was convinced that the reason he could not get "outside help" to run his school owed to the ruptures that had taken place between the various factions of "race leaders" a generation earlier. Years after those disagreements over dealings with northern white philanthropists had been settled, wrote Sage, those who were associated with independent black Baptist schools accused black educators like Hope of "trying to selfishly build up their own institutions" at the expense of the plethora of small, struggling schools like Central City College. "We were given to understand that the

fact of our visit would tend to dispel this feeling of suspicion." Hope and Reddick, the report continued, "are anxious to make" Central City "into a good secondary school, linked up with the Morehouse-Americus-Spelman system." What Holmes and Central City's trustees made of this downgrading of their more lofty aspirations was not a matter of public record, but it must have stung, especially in view of the fact that a year earlier the school had established (at least on paper) a college department. Noting that Central City College had been "poorly managed, and educationally amounts to very little," Sage added, "under wise direction, it has possibilities." Subsequent to the visit, Hope and Reddick sat down with the school's trustees, and together they searched for ways to recover from the fire—without monetary assistance from the General Education Board. They also explored the possibility of recruiting a new president.[55]

In 1924 President Holmes retired, and the board hired Rev. J. H. Gadson to serve in his place. Gadson came to Central City with experience running a small school with few resources. For eighteen years he had been president of Rome High and Industrial School in Rome, Georgia, an elementary and secondary school supported by two local Baptist associations that, according to the Jones Report, offered "fairly good" industrial training with "meager" support. In early 1927, Wallace Buttrick and Jackson Davis, field agent for the GEB stationed in Richmond, Virginia, visited the school. "Our aim," wrote Gadson to Davis after his visit, "is to maintain a class 'A' high school and develop our industrial and Bible department, especially our Agricultural Department." Gone were references to college courses and liberal arts and classical training. Gone as well were references to modern languages, history, and science. Gadson may have been pandering to the GEB with his emphasis on industrial and agricultural training when he neglected to inform the GEB of the GMBC's plans for Central City, which included a new building for the Department of Theology and "a first class laboratory for the development of our department of science." "Mr. Davis, please don't turn us down," wrote Gadson. "We greatly need the help of the General Education Board. Our main support for operating the College is the Georgia farmers and this has been an awful year on them for the reason of the low price of cotton and the high cost of cultivation." A gift of ten thousand dollars "would enable us to wind up a first year's class work, pay all back salaries, finish our payments on the boy's Dormitory," which had been destroyed in the fire, "repair the roof of our main building, install sewerage on campus and develop our Agricultural Department and beautify our grounds." Somewhat immoderately, he added, it would also "go to saving my life and the life of the institution." What Gadson did not know was that there was not even "the slightest prospect"

of support from the GEB, not even before Buttrick and Davis's visit, as an internal memo written upon receipt of Gadson's letter shows.[56]

Acting on the assumption that perseverance pays off, Gadson became more insistent than ever in his supplications. After "reading and re-reading" Davis's rejection, Gadson wrote how "sorry" he was to learn that the GEB was not helping the smaller schools. "Our school is small because no body has given us any money to make it big." Nobody, wrote an anguished Gadson, gave Central City as much as $200 at any one time. There was the "southern white gentleman" from Macon, who gave the school $100 once, but in the twenty-seven years of the school's existence, that was the largest contribution. "I am so worried and strained trying to save the College from the auction block that I hardly know what to say to you." "Please save us," wrote a frantic Gadson, either with a dollar contribution or by refinancing the school and giving "us a chance to redeem it ourselves."[57]

In late 1928 President Gadson set out on the first of two fundraising missions to the North. This one included a stop at the offices of the General Education Board in New York City on his way to visit Baptists in Boston. At the GEB Gadson met briefly with A. W. Armour, for a man-to-man talk, "with no particular purpose in mind beyond . . . 'getting acquainted,'" wrote Armour in his report to his colleagues. In Boston, Gadson spoke with three local Baptist ministerial organizations—the "colored" Baptist Ministers Union, the black Interdenominational Alliance, and the "white and colored" Baptist Ministers Union. When Dr. J. C. Massee, a native Georgian and "an honored graduate" of Mercer University in Macon, introduced Gadson "as his friend and brother from Georgia" to the interracial union, "he commended me and Central City in a most flattering manner," wrote Gadson to *The Georgia Baptist* in a "Letter From the Field." If all of this sounded promising, Gadson was not one to sugarcoat the truth. "I am not collecting much money," he flatly stated. "Boston is a well worked field." In principle the white Baptists were not averse to supporting another school. "No citizen here thinks they have done too much towards advancing educational work among our people." Yet the recipient of such support must prove worthy. According to Gadson, "they do think that our people ought to do a great deal more for themselves than what they do."[58]

It would be hard to imagine anyone doing more than Georgia's GMBC had done to support their own school. From its earliest days Central City had been eking out a bare subsistence from small donations from the GMBC's member churches, pastors, and sometimes even the kindness of strangers. The state convention held rallies periodically to energize giving to the college through church missionary offerings, and in order to coax others to

do the same they published the results by church in *The Georgia Baptist*. The GMBC made donations even to those schools that received funding from the American Baptist Home Missionary Society and the General Education Board, including Morehouse and Spelman, the two black colleges with "class A" accreditation from the Georgia State Department of Education. In fact, the state Baptist organization gave those comparatively well-funded schools more support than Central City College until 1928, when its Woman's Convention reversed the proportions and began the policy of favoring Central City, then $20,000 in debt, over all black denominational schools in the state. That same year, church women's groups increased their giving, with the majority of donations coming from Savannah's mainline black Baptist churches.[59] It is inaccurate to think of black southerners merely as receivers of charity, as Boston's white Baptists evidently did. Black southern Baptists were donors, too, contributing over the years millions of dollars in self-help.

Around the same time Gadson embarked on his first fundraising mission to the North, the state convention announced a rally with the goal of raising $30,000, a sum that would "retire all of the indebtedness" and lead to "The Emancipation" of Central City College. Churches had always made monthly donations, mostly in the $5.00 to $10.00 range, but that month Rev. J. M. Nabrit's Mount Olive Baptist in Atlanta contributed $103.00. The following winter the white First Baptist Church in Savannah collected $25.00 from its congregation. While making church donors feel as though they "are a part of this great Baptist family in Georgia," there was only so much these rallies could do. Gadson's pleas to the GEB, often despairing and sometimes theatrical, nevertheless did not overstate the hardships faced by black Georgians and the personal sacrifices they made when the offering plate came around to them in church. In 1931, during the Great Depression, he wrote, "Our people work hard and give freely of a part of their earnings for the advancement of education, but . . . they have been out of work and the farmer has not been able to get anything for his crops in Georgia."[60]

Writing about Gadson and Central City's board, Rev. E. G. Thomas, who became publicity director for the college after his embattled tenure ended at Savannah's First African Baptist Church in the 1920s, declared they "have hardly had straw; but they have been making brick." Indeed, from straw the high school division managed to establish a small library "of about 1,000 valuable books," and a science laboratory, both of which were included in Thomas Jesse Jones's recommendations for ways southern black schools could improve. In 1930 the high school received state accreditation. According to an end-of-year report made by the Special Educational Contact Commission,

on which John Hope served, the school maintained "a creditable Theological Department," which in 1931 had thirteen young ministers-in-training signed up. The school's board of trustees had plans to begin "anew a creditable college department." Seven out of the now ten school instructors had college degrees, a marked improvement over the early days when only one member of the faculty had completed college.[61]

Despite these considerable achievements, the school's future was tenuous. In what may have been his final appeal to the GEB, Gadson connected saving Central City to the survival of black humanity. In a letter to Field Secretary Davis detailing the school's recent fiscal history of second mortgages and threatened foreclosure for nonpayment of "about fifteen notes," Gadson wrote, "Central City College fills a very large place in the hearts of the Negro Baptist in Georgia." It belongs to "the big lot of poor Negroes" who "work hard and give freely as part of their earnings for the advancement of education." Black Georgians "look upon this institution as their ideal of a great college and because of that, they will not send their children" anywhere else. Gadson begged Davis not to ignore his letter, as the GEB had done so many times in the past, and to tell him why the GEB had not even considered Central City. "What is wrong with us?" he asked plaintively. "Please point [to] the wrong or weakness and let us get in line for help."[62]

At long last the GEB answered the demoralized Gadson. Field Secretary Davis explained that the policy of the General Education Board was to encourage the "many struggling church schools" to work with "county training schools" or become "gradually absorbed into the public school system." In short, there was nothing Gadson and Central City College could do to qualify for GEB money. Davis's explanation well reflected the GEB's policy of attempting to stimulate southern state government spending on public education as the first priority of its program for black education. Financial support for black private and denominational schools was secondary. To this end, Davis suggested to Gadson that he confer with J. C. Dixon, state agent for Negro rural schools, and "the local superintendent of schools in regard to possible contributions for tuition of local pupils." "I regret," wrote Davis, "that there is no way in which we can assist you as the General Education Board does not make contributions to schools of this type."[63]

Gadson and his board of trustees may have missed Davis's point about the GEB's overall mission, to make southern state governments fiscally responsible for educating all its citizens. Instead, they seemed to construe the lack of GEB funding solely as a problem of pallor. In 1935 they sat down with some leading "white citizens of Macon" who were interested in helping "the Colored Baptists in ridding their school . . . of debt," strengthening its "administrative

leadership," and "raising the standard of instruction given at the school," with a "particular emphasis on theological training." Arthur Lewis, a white attorney from Macon, wrote a letter to the GEB on behalf of his fellow "white citizens." The "primary justification for a denominational school is the training given religious leaders," wrote Lewis, and Central City "has been deficient in this." More than a half million black Baptists lived in Georgia, and they are "largely influenced by their preachers, the majority of whom have little qualification for the leadership their position gives them." Lewis, like many black middle-class churchmen and women, distinguished between "trained" ministers who worked for human progress and the rest who worked against it. He explained to the GEB that the quality of religious leadership had the potential to "raise the standard of living and thinking among our Negro population" more effectively than anything else. Despite the white manly heart-to-heart, Lewis's request for a financial donation was turned down within a week.[64]

Despite years of earnest appeals to men with money in the North, church rallies, fundraising trips, letters of recommendation from important white southern citizens—and the most important black one, Booker T. Washington—until its final days in 1938, Central City College never stopped struggling for ever more elusive financial security. Central City was at the same time a source of pride and frustration for Georgia's black Baptists: pride because it represented their highest aspirations, and frustration because the school was never able to achieve its founders' goals; namely, to sustain an independent black Baptist college that would educate generations of black southerners that rivaled Morehouse and Spelman graduates. Central City's inability to elicit GEB support was not the result of an industrialist-philanthropist conspiracy to create a subordinate producing class of black workers. Rev. E. K. Love and members of the then dissident state Baptist association organized the school at the historical moment that philanthropy was undergoing a wide-ranging transformation that was meant to alter the structure of the southern educational system. By the turn of the twentieth century, northern philanthropists came to be dominated ideologically by the GEB and its program for southern education. Moreover, by the time Central City College appeared on the scene, the South had become a different place from what it had been only a few years earlier, in 1867, when William Jefferson White opened his Augusta Institute in the basement of Friendship Baptist. When Central City opened its doors for the first time, not only had federal troops become a distant memory—having departed more than twenty years ago—but a significant weakening of the Democrats in national politics occurred as a precursor to the region emerging as a one-party, solid

Democratic South. In an environment of scarcity, white southerners became strongly committed to the ideology of white supremacy and equally committed to crushing any challenges to the social order, including black education and any kind of ambition.

Central City College, organized at the pinnacle of Booker T. Washington's personal success and public influence, did not correspond to the Washingtonian ideal as it was expressed at Hampton and Tuskegee. Given its original impetus, it is not surprising that its leaders chose to emulate GEB's model of classical education that included a good dose of instruction in Christianity and some practical training in targeted trades. The school's blending of ancient languages and modern academic subjects with farming and printing suggests the nuance that has often not been appreciated in studies of the debates over black education in the post-Reconstruction South. The usual dichotomous rendering of the disagreement between Booker T. versus W. E. B. does not take into account the range of political traditions and genealogies that came together in a new context. The whole notion of industrial education was not a statically odious agenda as has often been assumed. Even the reasons behind black educators' embrace of classical education has often been understood with a present-mindedness that fails to take into account the whole notion of modern Progressive Era pedagogy. Students who went to Central City—or Morehouse or Spelman, for that matter—were being prepared to assume the duties and responsibilities that come with being a citizen of a nation, not a general edification for the sake of well-rounded intellectual development. Black nationalist ministers and other church people who at the turn of the twentieth century favored the creation of black independent schools assumed that educated black people would move into the mainstream of national life, largely free to do and become what they chose and limited only by their intrinsic individual worth and effort. The significance of Central City, a provincial independent black Baptist school, tells us a great deal about the aspirations and philosophies of an emerging black middle class. The themes of racial uplift, Black Nationalism, idealized relations between men and women, and devotion to Christianized Western civilization intersected to produce a powerful force for liberation with deeply conservative elements.

CHAPTER 5

"PEACE AND HARMONY OF THE CHURCH"

The Secularization of Black Savannah

It has long been an article of faith among scholars that from antebellum times through the modern civil rights movement, black churches have been the principal social, economic, and political institutions created and sustained by black Americans. Much has been written about black churches, without question the most diverse of all black institutions from the period of Reconstruction to World War I.[1] While it cannot be disputed that black churches have been important centers of organizing social and ritual life since the days of slavery, the continual process of diversification of black institutional life since emancipation gradually undermined their predominance. Relationships between the churches and their communities and the interactions of church members adjusted to the evolving social geography of the city. In the early 1920s the churches still dominated black institutional and associational life. They accommodated a variety of activities ranging from worship to welfare and included education, church politics, concerts, and games. Mainline black Baptist churches monitored their members' religious and social behavior and those who were suspected of transgressing church morals and manners were

brought before sacred tribunals for trial and sentencing. By the early 1930s the churches became more tolerant of nonconformist behavior and even church doctrine, and they sought less influence over their members' private lives. The internal workings of the churches corresponded to larger social transformations. As black Savannahians joined the Great Migration to the North, mainline church congregations decreased in numbers. The Depression-era weakening of black business—the material basis of Black Christian Nationalism—accompanied the rise of secular social and political organizations. The emergence of a new black middle class, more educated than previous generations of black leadership, was less insular and focused on self-help and community uplift as it readied itself for the postwar civil rights movement, when, like black Americans everywhere, it would demand equal treatment before the law.

The churches were vibrant institutions, abundantly endowed with secular and sacred ritual. Membership in a black Baptist community of faith was much more than an escape into a sanctuary from the harshness of racism, economic hardship, and threats of violence. While the churches did provide protection from the brutality of the outside world, they were also dynamic communities in which each person had a defined role that was performed through church conflict and harmony with purpose and clarity. Membership in a faith community involved real concessions to the corporate community. Upon joining the church, members pledged not only to contribute to its economic viability, they also undertook to adhere to prescribed standards of behavior that on the face of it seemed rooted in nineteenth-century Victorian conventions of morality. But churches were not merely following rote behavior; they were responding to contemporary social developments over which they had little control. Their rituals ran a gamut from fanciful diversions to reflexive cultural performances in which participants and observers became subject and object, and the rites themselves became part of the social context.

Baptist churches operated with complex governing bodies that included a separation of powers, judicial structures, and elections. In the Baptist denomination, unlike "high church" Episcopal and Catholic denominations, the minister acted not as an intermediary or conduit between congregants and God, but as an example and a guide. Baptists believed that each saint communicated directly with the Almighty. When black evangelical Christians set about to pray, they did so more with the idea of having a "conversation with God," rather than through supplication and entreaty. Ecclesiastical authority resided with members of the faith community and not the lay or ordained leadership. Through the congregation, God, the eternal head of the church, bestowed all of his authority on the pastor. The Baptist denom-

ination, the most "democratic" of all the mainline religious orders, did not have bishops or cardinals, nor did it operate synods, presbyteries, or any larger body with greater governing authority. A Baptist minister was not dispatched to a church by a central office but was "called" to the pulpit by the individual congregation, which exercised sovereignty on such matters. Like white Baptists, black Baptists linked their churches into larger associations and conventions. These denominational organizations—Georgia's General Missionary Baptist Association, the Berean Baptist Convention in Savannah, and even the National Baptist Convention, Inc.—did not make binding decisions for member churches. They promoted broader fellowship, mutual support, and general encouragement.[2]

Theoretically, Baptist churches were "bottom up" operations; every member—male and female, banker and river dredger—had a vote. While church members might accept recommendations from the deacons in their monthly conference meeting, they were free to accept or reject such guidance as they saw fit. After Second Baptist pastor M. A. Hunter "made a strong and urgent appeal for the back salary due him" in October 1930 "and asked if something could not be done tonight," the deacons recommended the following month a "Scale of reduction in Salaries," including 20 percent for the church pastor and sexton and "a reduction of fifty per cent for all other help." Acting in the manner of a lower house of a legislature serving interests closer to the ground, the congregation rejected the recommendation. Church members were moved by Hunter's plaintive appeal, while the deacons focused their concerns on the overall fiscal health of the church.[3]

Black churches in the urban South responded to the pressures of poverty in ways that were different from northern urban churches in the 1920s and 1930s, before the federal government devised social safety nets. They did not operate soup kitchens or distribute coal and other essentials for the home to recently arrived migrants from the countryside. They were too busy taking care of their own. Many churches maintained "Poor Saints" lists of impoverished elderly and sick members. Once placed on the list, a "Poor Saint" could expect a visit from a church committee at regular intervals with provisions and even cash. The board of deacons determined who was to be included, and the list was ratified during regular monthly church conferences. In 1922 the Second Baptist Deacon Board considered placing Francis Sawyer on the list. "The case was thoroughly discussed," wrote the secretary for the deacon board, and when "it was shown that her children and grand children are fully able to care for her if she will consent to live with them," she was not counted as a Poor Saint. "Sister [Julia] Maxwell[,] widow of H. Maxwell," was considered next; "but the fact was made known that her son gives her

from 2 to 3 dollars regularly at stated periods," and the deacons did not recommend her for the list. Two years later, after her deacon reported Maxwell was in a "feeble condition," she was counted as a Poor Saint and slated to receive two dollars a month. In like manner, in 1918 First African's Deacon David Smalls reported to the board that one of his ward residents, Priscilla Randolph, had "no dependable means of support," and with the vote of the General Conference she was placed on First African's Poor Saints list. In 1920 First African's deacons agreed to give Anna Wing ten dollars "to assist her in repairing her home, so as to make it comfortable for the winter, in her disabled condition."[4]

Ordinary church functions in a world defined by acute scarcity served not only to advance religious goals but also provide certain advantages that were otherwise unavailable. Church Sunday schools assumed special importance as purveyors of literacy skills in the absence of adequate public education. Second Baptist extended its Sunday school in the summer of 1925 with a Daily Vacation Bible School, a Christian version of summer day camp for children of working-class parents. The Bible School, the "first of its kind conducted by a colored church" in Savannah, was declared a "grand success" by Pastor S. D. Ross. "[C]hildren from the lanes and other humble sections of the city who had never before had Sunday school advantages" attended at no charge. They studied crafts, "manual training," music, gymnastics, "moral science," and, of course, the Bible. Not long after, just as it was catching on throughout the South, the Vacation Bible School became a central feature of black Baptist life in Savannah.[5]

In addition to offering Bible study, Sunday school, and opportunities to commune with God in a community of faith, churches provided ample opportunity for members and nonmembers to engage in all manner of entertaining distraction, some of it distinctively highbrow. In 1927 Second Baptist defied both custom and law when it invited white musicians, "among the best trained singers of the city," to present an "Unusual Concert." Black and white Savannahians congregated to share a cultural experience that under any other circumstance would have remained off-limits to black Savannahians. Less eager to transgress the rules of Jim Crow but no less willing to deprive black Savannahians of high culture was Saint John Baptist's Rev. E. O. S. Cleveland's piano and pipe organ concerts. They were formal events, which Cleveland performed in "full dress" with "a baby grand piano on stage." The embrace of classical music represented much more than assimilation to European cultural forms. It was as though concert organizers understood the Bourdieu-ian point that prestige involves forms of knowledge called "cultural capital," an acquired taste attainable through a lengthy process of instruc-

tion. Accumulating cultural capital was like joining a club with unwritten but exacting rules, speaking an insider's language, even sharing meaningful glances. Second Baptist impresarios associated the distinctive classical form with education and power, and therefore with inclusion in larger society. Status was about political entitlement and legal location within civil society and the embrace of classical forms of music in the churches—along with social conventions, dress, and other kinds of cultural consumption—became a critical part of the project of racial uplift and aspiration for racial progress.[6]

Membership in a Baptist faith community involved a commitment to sustaining the financial viability of the church. Fundraising schemes were organized to supplement pledges and monthly tithing responsibilities (that usually represented 10 percent of a family's income). In addition to generating income for the churches, these fundraising efforts brought the faith communities together, deepening bonds of fellowship and mutual support networks. There were times when the fundraising involved more drudgery than pleasure, as when the original female members of Tremont Temple Baptist Church raised money to construct their first building by selling home-cooked meals to longshoremen on the wharf. While the quickest and easiest fundraising scheme may have been the church rally in which members were asked to donate money for a particular cause—to purchase a new organ, pay off a mortgage, or make a specific improvement or repair—it was not unusual for church leaders to devise more creative ways to get members (and non-members) to part with their money. Hardly a month went by when a church did not report a successful contest for the prettiest or most popular baby in the black weekly. On a Monday night in 1925 First African sponsored a "Treasure Hunt" that commenced from Mrs. Zella Davis's home. Second Baptist's Finance Committee dreamed up a flight of fancy in 1935 with a make-believe "race by airplane in a transcontinental flight from Savannah . . . to Los Angeles." Their aim was to raise "2000 dollars over a period of 60 days." While there is no record of how close the church came to its goal, contestants no doubt had themselves a good time.[7]

The variety of fundraising schemes seemed to be endless, and many of them not only raised money, they also provided lessons in civics and social studies. Second Baptist, read an announcement in the *Tribune*, "is making a determined effort to render a definite service to the spiritual, social and educational welfare" of black Savannah. In 1923 the church held a "mock" state General Baptist Convention to raise money "to clear away all impending indebtedness of the church." The "Convention" lasted for several months during which time church members and other participants were divided into 12 district conventions, 23 associations, and 56 churches. The rally was a

huge success, raising $2,137, enough to pay off the $1,500 mortgage on the church "and other small indebtedness and have a neat little sum in the church treasury." In 1928 Beth Eden Baptist simulated a presidential campaign and election to raise money for the church. "Enthusiasm ran high up to the last minute," wrote the church clerk. When the "final returns were made," the Republicans won "by a majority of 128 votes." Members of First Bryan Baptist organized a rally with a more bellicose premise in 1932, with the intention of raising $1,000. "Fighters" were "drafted" from the faith community and divided into "Regulars" and "Insurgents," and a "Board of Strategy" was organized as well.[8]

"Mock" rituals, a venerable southern tradition that rehearsed the hallowed wedding ceremony in a different social context, ranged from the benign "midget weddings," in which children played the roles of the traditional wedding party, to the highly charged "womanless wedding" that involved cross-dressing men taking phony wedding vows as they engaged in physical comedy. In the black churches these were elaborate performances, part fundraising scheme and part playful encounters with quotidian social and religious life. In white communities these highly charged ceremonies frequently added blackface to the practice of cross-dressing, placing black men and white women—an enormous source of white anxiety—at the center of attention. For the historian, the womanless wedding provides an opportunity to navigate the bumpy terrain that resulted from the collision between ideas about the way things were and the way they ought to be. In laughing at the "raucous burlesque" of the womanless wedding, white men and women found relief from the dread of their own desires, thus diffusing its power. If white southerners frequently faced class and status (including racial) anxieties, black southerners faced difficulties sorting out relations between men and women against a social backdrop in which black men were unable to protect their wives and daughters. Womanless weddings seemed to crop up everywhere, especially in smaller towns and cities like Savannah where rural lifestyles and behaviors were not too far removed. Deriving roughly from one of the earliest culture industries in the United States—the blackface minstrel—the womanless wedding was a reflexive cultural performance where the same performers were both subject and object; it took place within a social and historical context, and more than the baby contests, mock conventions, and "Tom Thumb" weddings, it was part of that content itself. It skewed a real-life event to not merely reflect a particular social context, but to create a new one.[9]

In Savannah, First African Baptist held a "womanless wedding" in 1934, deemed "quite a success" by the *Tribune*. Second Baptist produced another

one two years later. Frank Dilworth, a leading black businessman who served on the board of trustees of the Mechanics Savings Bank before its demise in the late 1920s, and who helped reorganize the NAACP in 1930, played the part of the bride. John Delaware, the founding president of the Savannah Boys Club, and a deacon at First African, was a bridesmaid. If the white womanless wedding was a way of navigating around a collective dread of "hillbillyism," we might similarly unpack the womanless weddings in Savannah's mainline black Baptist churches. Black men becoming women in American southern culture in the 1920s and 1930s, a culture that venerated the dual principles of white supremacy and masculinity, were holding up a safe mirror to see what they could not look at otherwise; white society had made them women already, emasculating them through the violence of lynching, which frequently involved castration. Socially black men were feminized through their relegation to subservience in work and the way they were required to interact with white people. And psychologically they were feminized when they could not protect their women from white men's forced sexual encounters. Despite the lucid and sober interpretations of the frenetic "festivals of violence" that Ida B. Wells and other critics made of the "white lies" that fortified lynching—that men were lynched for raping white women—the accusations persisted, as did the lynchings, sustaining an atmosphere of terror.[10] Black men were punished for debauching white womanhood or they were consigned to comic inconsequence in minstrel shows: whichever way you cut it, they were feminized.

Black men were feminized in another way, too. Relationships between black men and women in Savannah were altered in the early 1920s after the woman's suffrage amendment was ratified, giving lie to the ideology that assigned men to public spheres while women were incontrovertibly identified with the home, as the ideal wife and mother—passive, delicate, pure, and submissive. Despite the efforts of black female activists to compensate for the incongruous circumstances that gave them access to the voting booth at the same time that men were disfranchised, they must have seemed "unladylike"—irascible with a muscular veneer—to themselves and to their men. If one might surmise that the female impersonator in the *white* womanless wedding somehow diluted the unsettling significance of the growing political strength of women expressed through the white woman's movement with raucous and irreverent finger poking, the black female impersonator may have served a similar purpose. Black men lampooning black women as "women" were redressing the creeping imbalance between the sexes that appeared all the more evident in the social environment that politicized black women and de-politicized black men.[11] This "setting right" of relations be-

tween black men and women in the womanless wedding was welcomed by both sexes. Far from undermining communal fellowship ties, it posed the possibility of their continuing regeneration.

Discipline and Punish

Throughout history, churches have assumed tremendous importance in the preservation of social harmony and the maintenance of particular standards of morality. In pre-modern sacralized societies where churches took on many of the functions of a modern state, church clerics served as lawmakers and churches operated tribunals to enforce the law. In the post-Revolutionary United States frontier districts, reports of "moral laxity and religious indifference" proliferated. Every community "was in pressing need of moral restraint and guidance," wrote a church historian years later. Records of early Baptist churches west of the Alleghenies show the importance of churches in the "preservation of order and the maintenance of decency." Churches dispensed punishment for a range of behavior from adultery to destroying corner trees, threatening a slave, "froliking," and dancing.[12]

Among black Baptists the history of church discipline goes back to the period of "biracial" churches before the Civil War, and it continued to flourish in black Baptist churches during the post–Civil War era and after the turn of the twentieth century. Just as young rural churches had used discipline to promote order and stability during an earlier age of chaos and expansion, so too did black churches when large numbers of rural folk were migrating to the cities, bringing with them their country ways. As late as the 1920s church disciplinary hearings were a familiar occurrence in many of Savannah's black Baptist churches. Lay and ordained church leaders devised elaborate monitoring schemes in efforts to control members' behavior, in and out of church. The deacons at Second Baptist divided their membership into a ward system and assigned a "ward captain" to keep an eye on church members for church attendance, payment of pledges, and general behavioral issues. They would report back to the board of deacons, which would in turn decide on what action to take. The arrival of Bishop C. M. Grace in Savannah in the mid-1920s inspired such curiosity among black Savannahians that leaders from the most elite of the black Baptist churches, fearful of losing ecclesiastical dominance, organized surveillance committees to monitor the comings and goings of those who attended Grace's tent services.[13]

With church sovereignty spread thin among the many disparate members, each with her own voice and her own will, faith communities themselves sometimes verged on anarchy. As in any social institution churches experienced periods of dissonance. The continuing need for regeneration of

communal fellowship, necessary for the coherence of the church community, posed special challenges. Discord was the result of a constant process of readjustment as individuals within the churches attempted to achieve harmony or voice disapproval or resistance within accepted juridical and social structures without undermining spiritual unity. The abiding need for readjustment was the product of social and economic shifts in the larger society that constantly rearranged the relationships between the world and the faith communities. Churches did not exist trans-historically in vacuums but were organically connected to temporal life; as such they were constantly adapting to historical processes. Discipline of members' interior lives and church governance more generally occurred at the same time that the churches provided its members some protection from the fear of violence, the violence of poverty, and of living in the presence of daily humiliation and degradation.

Church disciplinary hearings were performative ritual dramas, staged theatrical events, and acted by all members of the church using partially scripted language. The opening act took place in the private chambers of the board of deacons, and act 2 occurred before the monthly business meeting of the entire congregation. In keeping with the congregational nature of the Baptist denomination, church members made decisions relating to each other's welfare, the financial health of the church, and sometimes what kinds of social and even political concerns the church should take on. The disciplinary hearings were not merely imposed on the social life of the faith community. They were ways in which participants from all sides—including top *and* bottom—constantly created and reproduced meaningful social patterns. When members transgressed rules and regulations, they were often certain of their punishment. They voluntarily submitted to the trials, signifying the subtle pleasure they derived from admitting their sins, submitting to disciplinary action, and receiving the church's compassion and forgiveness. Disciplinary hearings, punishment, acts of contrition, and forgiveness served to ritually regulate morals and deepen fellowship. They also provided an acceptable way for an individual to publicly air a protest against some position adopted by the church.

The ritual of punishment cleansed the church fellowship and infused it with morality and virtue, instructed the transgressor in the principles of loyalty and righteous behavior, and welcomed her or him back into the fold. Punishment frequently involved a temporary suspension from church fellowship. Sometimes members voluntarily absented themselves from the watchful eye of the church and its fellowship, which is most likely what "Bro. Boney Jackson" did in 1916. For two years Jackson, a member of First African's East Savannah Prayer House, was "out of fellowship." In August 1918 he appeared

before the deacon board at the mother church in Savannah and asked to be "restored"; and without discussion, he was. Sister Janette Campbell ("nee Anderson") was expelled from First African in 1898 for worshipping with "a band of disgruntled and expelled members." Twenty-two years later, in 1920, she appeared before the deacons "in a penitent manner," and the deacons recommended that she be "restored to Christian priviledge [*sic*]."[14]

While Sister Campbell's twenty-two-year sabbatical culminated with an unremarkable readmission into First African's fellowship, Sister Hettie Roberts was another story. Her behavior suggested deeper church conflict when she announced at the June 1928 church conference that "she had been dis-satisfied for some time" because Pastor S. D. Ross "mistreated" her husband, Deacon John Roberts. Not only did she refuse to pledge at the conference, she left the meeting "in an abrupt manner." If the whole world is a stage and social living a kind of theater, social drama such as the one acted out here is meta-theater—looking inward to at the same time reaffirm its values and criticize its practices. These were "inside" and "outside" affairs that suggested complex relations between events in the churches and beyond their walls as faith communities searched for resolution and moved toward denouement, not merely a resolution of the conflict but also a social interpretation of "reality." While the records do not reveal the whole story of what had transpired between Deacon John Roberts and Pastor Ross, Roberts had, it seems, been removed from the board of deacons, and Mrs. Roberts was acting out of loyalty to her husband. The deacon board appointed a "special committee" to "wait upon" Hettie Roberts and investigate "the matter of contempt shown by her against the church and a willful refusal to support same." The deacons sat with Sister Roberts in "prayer and meditation to God," endeavoring to convince their "sister to come back and be reconciled with us in our church," but "she absolutely said under no consideration what ever would she come or pay anything in our church." At the monthly church conference the deacons said, "We tried with all our hearts to have her see her duty in so doing, but she stubbornly refused all advice." More than a year later, in October 1929, the board of deacons recommended "restoration" of Deacon Roberts—along with two other deacons—to the board. While the records do not divulge any clue as to why Roberts and the other two deacons needed reinstatement, church members quickly voted in accordance. Several weeks later an emotional Hettie Roberts appeared before the deacons with a heartfelt message. She said "she loved the church and has always loved it, and whatever she has done or said that is an offense to the church she is sorry for it & asked to be forgiven." She was, of course, forgiven first by the deacons and then by the members in church conference, and that was that.[15]

Church leaders and members understood transgressions against the church—be they moral, schismatic, lack of financial support, or non-attendance—as breaking the church covenant, the voluntary contractual basis of the faith community. Church members participated in the social drama to mend the rupture, as it were, for the welfare of the general good. The central point here is less about the eruption of discord, but how it was settled. The hearing became a way for the faith community to negotiate conflicts between the general good and the individual will—a contradiction that many Baptists met for the first time (but not the last) head-on when they went through the conversion experience and joined a faith community. Religious conversion required a radical individualization as each candidate was "awakened" to his sinfulness and faced alone the meaning of God's judgment. After "conviction" of sin, segregation of the self from "the world," and the lone ecstasy of conversion, the new Baptist received the comfort of close fellowship. This process, as profound as it was, did not always mitigate the reappearance of human variability. At the institutional level church discipline served as a way to achieve group cohesion and order and harmony out of the chaos of humanity.[16]

The most widely punishable schismatic transgression one could commit in the 1920s was attending Bishop C. M. Grace's tent services. Still an unknown charismatic apostolic preacher looking for converts to join his sect when he arrived in Savannah for the first time in 1926, Grace would go on to organize the United House of Prayer for All People, with churches established up and down the eastern seaboard. Grace enthralled countless black Savannahians from different denominations when he came to town with his extravagant claims to be one of God's apostles, equal to Jesus Christ and possessed with the power to heal those who placed their faith in "Daddy Grace," as his followers referred to him. His appearance elicited a range of responses, mostly passionate and frequently laying bare conflict between the classes. Attempting to restrain Grace's magnetic pull on members of mainline black Baptist churches, deacons and ministers got together from different churches and formed surveillance committees, sometimes referred to as "Presbyteries" in local church records. The committees monitored who attended Grace's tent services, and reported their findings to church deacons.[17]

Two of the city's elite black Baptist churches, Second Baptist and First African, regularly summoned members before their bodies to answer for being present at Bishop Grace's tent services. Individuals who were seen entering or leaving Grace's tent were compelled to appear before their respective church deacons to face discipline for transgressions of faith. Punishment purged the faith community of theological and doctrinal impurities, not the

individuals who had wandered off track. In 1926, R. H. Jackson, an ordained minister, was summoned before the First African Deacon Board "after being examined by a Presbytery of the city's leading ministers" for "repeatedly" attending "the Tent meetings of Bishop C. M. Grace." Jackson was excluded from his church and six months later, "upon his confession," was restored. Between 1926 and 1931 First African temporarily expelled thirteen members who were caught attending Grace's services. Although Grace did not claim to be a Baptist, the incorporation of multiple full immersion baptisms in his services would have earned him the title "pedo-Baptist," a reference to phony faith. Baptists experienced the rite only once, to celebrate rebirth, while Grace's followers participated in this ceremony as often as they desired, in order to "fulfill all righteousness." In 1929 Second Baptist deacons reported that it was "known and deffinitly [*sic*] stated that Sisters Lula Cogile and Louise Monroe have denied the faith by joining pedo Baptist Churches." The deacons "therefore recommended that the hand of Fellowship be withdrawn from them & they be excluded from the church."[18]

Although expulsion from the church fellowship for engaging in schismatic transgression was not automatic, some sort of discipline was. Significantly, the records do not reveal a single occasion when a church member refused to appear before the deacon board to answer for a transgression. That church members willingly submitted to the certainty of discipline demonstrated their loyalty to the fellowship and a willingness to sacrifice for the larger community. In 1926 Celie Reed and P. A. Sumann, members of First African, were observed attending Grace's meetings, and they were summoned to appear before the deacons. There they "expressed a deep regret for having violated the rules of the church and penitently ask[ed] for forgiveness." The deacon board's clerk wrote that since the two women "have expressed ignorance of violation of the Laws and the time and shown signs of regret," and since they gave "assurances of not further adhering to [Grace's] doctrines," the deacons "recommend that they be reprimanded, and required to make public acknowledgement, and ask the churches forgiveness." After that was done the matter was laid to rest.[19]

While less elite churches sometimes concerned themselves with schismatic transgressions, they did not take action against members for attending Grace's tent meetings. These churches had more in common with Grace's worship style than the more elite churches whose leaders were struggling to lead their congregants and black Christians more generally to conform to middle-class standards of behavior. Savannah's younger and more marginal churches had less to fear from Grace; like Grace, they attracted recent migrants from the countryside who felt comfortable with enthusiastic wor-

ship styles, outdoor baptisms, and sermons that appealed more to the spirit and the heart than the mind. Besides that, as recalled by Rev. John Quincy Adams, who was raised in First African, graduated from Morehouse, and pastored Mount Zion Baptist beginning in 1919: "We didn't do much turning out. We were glad to get them in." When an individual was summoned to appear before the deacons in a church like Mount Zion, it was for failing repeatedly to attend church or for delinquency in tithing. In 1913, six years before Adams was called to the pulpit, Mount Zion expelled Venus Mitchell for "Joining the 7th Day Advent" Church.[20] Even the marginal churches demanded singular devotion from their members.

In 1922, Second Baptist leadership, concerned with similar individual lapses and sacred misdemeanors, strengthened its ward system when it assigned Anna Cooper responsibility for collecting the names of all the Second Baptist "delinquents" while "going her rounds over the city." The deacon board instructed her to turn the names over to individual deacons, who upon further investigation would report back to the board, which would choose suitable action for each member. In 1925 Jas. A. Andrews was summoned to appear before the board "to make a statement relative to the pledge system which had been adopted by the church." Tithing was generally a fixed proportion of a member's income, and it fluctuated accordingly. Andrews admitted that he had not even pledged to contribute "and that he will not, under any circumstances comply with the requirement of the church, in regard to the pledge system." He was charged with "two offenses namely 1st insubordination and 2nd open defiance," and at the June conference the "right hand of fellowship was withdrawn" from Andrews "for emphatically refusing to pledge." In 1931 Deacon W. L. Lee reported that J. Shedrick "made ugly remarks" after Lee tracked Shedrick down in his ward and advised him "to attend and do something for the church," meaning contribute to its financial support. There is no record of the deacons taking action against Shedrick. Shedrick nevertheless began to tithe on his own, which suggests that placing the transgression into the minutes, the proverbial permanent record, was punishment enough.[21]

Bad behavior, fighting, and bickering in a manner "unbecoming to Christians" were also grounds for discipline and even temporary expulsion. Social drama is the stuff of daily life, and without the rituals in which violations were followed by compensatory actions and the reintegration of the wrongdoer into the faith community, the communities would have been in real danger of falling apart. Church discipline was the ritual glue that held the faith community together. Unsuitable Christian behavior covered a range of possible infractions, although generally not as weighty as when First African's Louise

Curry McCloud was accused of "murdering her husband." While McCloud's expulsion from the church fellowship would have been moot if she were found guilty by Savannah's civil authorities, that the church judicial apparatus found it necessary to formally exclude her suggests the symbolic role of church disciplinary hearings in mediating the conflicts between individual will and the larger community. Church punishment of McCloud was unlikely at that point (and likely the least of McCloud's problems), but it served to heal a spiritual rupture in the faith community itself. More common were interpersonal conflicts on the order of Bro. J. F. Johnson and Sisters Ella Jenkins and Mildred Johnson, accused of "engaging in a public broil [*sic*]." After hearing all three, the deacons concluded "that their offense involved gross immorality unbecoming Christians," and they recommended expulsion. In 1926 the deacons called Sisters Florence Thomas and Francis Brown to answer to the charge that they had "creat[ed] a disturbance by engaging in abusive language" after Sunday service and to discuss "the grievances exhisting [*sic*] between them." The deacons "investigated" the problem and declared that "the sisters acted in a manner unbecoming Christians." Thomas and Brown "acknowledge[d] the same and shook hands promising to forgive each other and bury their grievances." Their punishment was to plead guilty and apologize to First African members "as an evidence of their good faith."[22]

Such was the fate of backsliders and other lapsed Baptists including adulteresses, fornicators, moonshine distillers, and drunkards. They were welcomed back to the fold, but only after performing ritual acts of confession and repentance. Like sacraments, these performances represented a cleansing of the body of the faith community as it mediated the ever-present contradictions between individual will and the faith community itself. In 1918 Frank Greene, First African's sexton, was charged with "unbecoming" Christian conduct, namely for "being under the influence of intoxicant drink around the church during hours of service" one Sunday evening. Greene, evidently unable to hold his liquor and drawing attention to his inebriated condition, created a "public offense." When summoned to appear before the church tribunal Greene "confessed his guilt, and begged the mercy of the Board and church." Convinced of Greene's sincerity when he said he "deeply deplore[d] the offense" and "promise[ed] to do better," the deacons recommended "that he make a public confession and apology to the church in open conference." While Greene's "Christian privilege" was not repealed, he was suspended from his post for one month, "as a warning." In 1934 the Connors Temple Baptist Church general conference "Heard a Recommendation from the Dea Board Pertaining to griveousness Between Sister Mosell Brown and Sister Emo Dotry—witch was note settle." Although the parsimonious record fails

to specify what had transpired between the women and if punishment had resulted, it is likely that the deacon board settled—or at least silenced—the dispute.[23]

To its members the churches were stern but forgiving. While they welcomed backsliding congregants back into the fold after they were punished, pastors were held to a higher standard. In the early morning hours of November 6, 1934, Second Baptist's Rev. Ivory N. Perry and Brother Willie Cade were driving home, evidently after a night of drinking and carousing. Savannah police spotted their zigging and zagging automobile and pulled them over at East Broad and Gwinnett streets. They arrested Cade for "reckless driving" and "driving without a permit" and Perry for being intoxicated. A few hours later church deacons assembled in an emergency meeting to discuss the situation, and in a special church conference two days after that the chairman of the deacon board, W. S. Roundfield, introduced a resolution declaring the church pulpit "vacant." The pastor's conduct, said Roundfield, was "contrary to the ideals, principals, and teachings of the New Testament" and "has lowered the dignity and the morals of the pulpit, which is to be an example for the flock." Twenty-eight voted in favor of dismissing Perry, and nine abstained; Perry was shipped out posthaste, and Cade, a mere member of the flock and not its moral leader, was temporarily expelled when the conference met in its regular meeting the following month.[24]

No matter how much one sinned or how old one was, it was never too late to join the church fellowship. When Moses Manigault died in April 1940 he was about seventy years of age—an "old man, but a young Christian." All his life, according to E. O. S. Cleveland's funeral notes, Manigault had been "a hard sinner." He joined Saint John Baptist Church only six months before his death, and even though he "was never any service to the church, being sick when he joined," he died a member of the fellowship.[25] While joining a faith community involved obligations and responsibilities for which punishment was assured if those requirements were not met, spreading the Word and salvation had no term limits or prerequisites. The church was strict and its leaders unyielding; but as Manigault's story shows, at the end of the day the church was more interested in saving souls than maintaining a quid pro quo in relationship with its members.

The "Other" Women

If churches disciplined their members as a way to create order and doctrinal loyalty, they also regulated behavior as a defense of the integrity of black women. Anthropologists who have studied ritual have found it prominent in areas of uncertainty and powerlessness. Its repetitiveness provides comfort in

its predictability, and by inscribing the ritual within the realm of possibility and make-believe, it encourages contributors to participate in its meaning.[26] In the ritual of church discipline doing was believing. Punishment for sexual transgressions cleansed the body politic of the disease of sexuality, thereby removing the source of white southerners' anxiety and a salient underpinning of Jim Crow and white supremacy. Black Baptist men and women stayed within the bounds of prevailing attitudes about appropriate behavior for women, even as they were forced to accommodate to classic white upper-class angst over the consequences of the sheer power the upper crust exerted over a subjugated black domestic workforce.

Crimes of love and passion reflected the unremitting contradiction between human nature and prevailing cultural commandments. They took place in a complicated social setting that involved powerful struggles over the meaning of racialized womanhood in a society ruled by white persons who endeavored to render all black people second class. Human desire frequently transgresses societal (and even personal) rules, and punishment for sexual transgressions shows black churches as sanctuaries from the places where social boundaries were permanently on the edge of breakdown. Discipline and punishment were, in a sense, a war of maneuver over representation and symbolism. As white and black southerners struggled over definitions of black womanhood, the church rituals of punishment for sexual transgressions represented efforts to formulate new "truths." Beliefs in the dual natures of the sexes provided the vocabulary with which white southerners sought to debase black women; and it provided black southerners with a way to redeem black women's sexuality and their place as the moral center of the black family. Since the time of slavery, white opinion makers found advantages to regarding female sexuality in and out of wedlock as "promiscuous," and black female sexuality as "naturally" promiscuous. The invention of the black Jezebel and her endurance long after abolition provided white southerners with a powerful rationale for tolerating sexual relations between white men and black women, even when it was not consensual.[27]

The presence of black working-class women in southern white urban households expanded in the years following the abolition of slavery as black southerners migrated to the cities in search of employment. The introduction of wage labor broadened the white middle class and enabled them to employ black female servants. Some black servants lived with their employers, while others split their time between raising their own families and their employers'. In her provocative study of the ways nineteenth-century British elites distanced themselves from their domestic servants, and by extension the entire working class, cultural critic Anne McClintock explores the relations

of power in elite households with servants who were employed as childcare workers. If "children held social power over their servants in the household," she writes, female servants exercised "considerable power and influence over the children." This paradoxical arrangement had powerful implications for relations between the classes and sexes in adulthood.[28] McClintock's observations are relevant in exploring relationships between members of the white upper classes and black servant classes in the American South during Jim Crow, especially for what they suggest about the role of black churches in regulating female sexuality during a time when self-improvement was understood as the way to achieve racial advancement.

In a real sense, children of the white middle and elite classes grew up with two (or more) mothers. The black servant performed chores of intimacy—bathing, holding, comforting, and dressing—while the white biological mother, often distanced from her children, was frequently the object of remote adoration or abstract awe. Dorothy Bolden, a black domestic servant who worked for a white family in Atlanta during the early part of the twentieth century, recalled the complicated relationships between nursemaids and the children they cared for. Many of their duties involved nurturing, "Cause when their mother would leave them and you had to take care of them, if they stumped their toe, you had to kiss it and comfort that child, pet him and let him know somebody cared." The nursemaid did not perform emotional work without feeling. "You gave as much love to [the] children as you would give to your own almost," recalled Bolden. Children formed attachments, too, and complications arose as a result of the children's awareness of their parents' jealousy and racial prejudices. A child might treat his nursemaid with loving respect out of the parents' sight, but, said Bolden, "he would turn around when his mother got there and spit on you. Call you black, call you nigger."[29]

In her autobiography, Virginia Foster Durr, the youngest daughter in an affluent white family, recalls her close relationship with her black nurse growing up in the early part of the twentieth century in Birmingham, Alabama. Her nurse "was a second mother to me as black nurses were to many Southern white children. I was devoted to Nursie. She was as much a symbol of safety as my mother was. She took care of me completely—even bathed and dressed me. Nursie put me to bed at night, and her little girl, Sarah, who was just my age, slept with me quite often." Durr's nurse did not live with the Foster family, at least not full-time, much to the annoyance of Durr's mother, who would have preferred not to have to get up with the children in the night herself. "I actually lived in two worlds until I was seven years old," recalled Durr. "I lived in a white world and a black world, and I was accepted in both." She was loved in both, too, but around her seventh birthday Durr's mother,

grandmother, and her aunt May abruptly wrenched her away from the love and security of her black family, an immense source of pain for the little girl.[30] These stories, repeated time and again by black and white children growing up in the segregated South, initiated a range of responses, from confusion to resolve and outright hostility. They also contributed to the continuing splitting of female sexuality into black Jezebels and white Madonnas.

This division, while having its origins in slavery, was reborn in the class structure of the urban household after emancipation and owed a tremendous amount to the social forms of interaction that defined the New South. White children in the increasingly segregated South, in which black women and men were demonized as a matter of course, grew up with bifurcated allegiances; and the black servant, the object of the white child's love, returned insistently to the scene of memory often with the irresistible "force of fetish."[31] While Virginia Durr would grow up to devote her life to civil rights for black Americans, another prominent white southerner who developed a sexual attachment to a black woman early on pursued the opposite course. Strom Thurmond's relationship with his family's maid, Carrie Butler, in their home in Edgefield, South Carolina, produced a child in 1925. Butler was all of fifteen when her daughter, Essie Mae, was born, and the child's father, Strom Thurmond, already exhibiting what would become his life-long penchant for women much younger than himself, was twenty-three. As Essie Mae Washington-Williams tells the story, her mother was not a victim of rape; on the contrary, Carrie Butler carried a torch for Strom her entire life, until she died up North of kidney failure—and a broken heart. Washington-Williams chronicles a life of confusion, anger, revulsion, resentment, and even love toward her father, which seemed to well up inside of her despite her knowledge of her grandfather Will Thurmond's relationship to Ben ("Pitchfork") Tillman, also from Edgefield. Thurmond was Tillman's "Svengali," wrote Washington-Williams; he was the "architect of white supremacy," and Tillman was "arguably the meanest man in the history of American politics." Strom Thurmond's stiff reserve for years when he met his daughter and then his grandchildren, his "iron handshakes" that frequently came in place of the paternal affection she longed for so much, caused her endless emotional anguish.[32]

In 1948, while a student at Orangeburg State (for which her father paid), Essie Mae attended Thurmond's inauguration for governor in Columbia, South Carolina, and it was there that she saw her grandmother, Gertrude, for the first time, standing on the podium next to her son. "Gertrude was scary, formidable," wrote Essie Mae. "She looked old and very skinny, like someone from another era." Despite her wealth and social standing as the

widow of a prominent lawyer and judge, Gertrude Thurmond "resembled [one of] those hardscrabble farmers' wives, tough and flinty and without a smile." She was "the antithesis of the Scarlett O'Hara plantation goddess." Not only did Gertrude not know her granddaughter was watching her from the audience, "I would bet my life she didn't have a clue about my mother," continued Essie Mae. "She looked as if she would have killed her son if she had." And in a revealing criticism of Strom Thurmond that was firmly rooted in the southern racialized understanding of the dual nature of the sexes, Essie Mae held her grandmother responsible for not only her son's emotional distance but also his political rigidity. "Small wonder he found comfort in the arms of my mother," she said, "who was nothing like his own."[33]

Essie Mae's armchair psychoanalyses about her extended paternal family are compelling for what they suggest about the ways southern gender conventions intersected with the politics of white supremacy. The historical conditions that divided female sexuality so distinctly along class and racial lines seemed so "natural" to the workings of humankind. The double standard of interracial sexuality began in the Old South and continued well into the New. Working-class black women, the objects of so many white middle- and upper-class children's love and affection, appeared biologically driven to lechery and excess while white upper-class women, emotionally detached from their children, were perceived as Madonnas, indifferent to the deliriums of the flesh. In an ironic development, white men, in their wholesale rejection of black southerners, became mired in a dependence on their subordinates much like Hegel famously described in his description of the master-slave relationship, but with an important psychosexual dimension. The continuing domination of white southern men over their black workers continued after slavery, albeit in altered form as the status of the former slaves transmogrified into something approaching freedom. White men typically found themselves facing, in the words of two critics, a "conflictual fusion of power, fear, and desire."[34] Their psychological dependency on those same people whom they rigorously excluded at the social level became an element of their desire.

Strom Thurmond remained in contact with Carrie Butler until she died and with his black daughter Essie Mae and her children for the rest of his life, through several marriages—always to beautiful young white women. With each marriage it seemed that the "force of fetish" was more difficult to resist: Thurmond became ever more committed to white supremacy. While he had obvious reasons to keep the results of his sexual "indiscretion" a secret, perhaps more revealing of the meaning of the double standard for sexual transgressions was Essie Mae's—and Carrie Butler's—complicity with

their silence. "Although my father had never once ordered me to keep my mouth shut about him," wrote Essie Mae, "I was simply *conditioned* to be discreet."[35] She knew that if she spilled the beans, the senator would not have been the only casualty. Carrie Butler would have been another—and by extension Essie Mae and her family. It is likely that white defenders of Jim Crow and white supremacy would have held the fourteen-year-old Carrie Butler responsible for young Thurmond's behavior.

Butler and Washington-Williams' voluntary silence also helps to shed light on the meaning of the disciplinary actions of mainline black churches during the era of Jim Crow. Middle-class and elite black Baptists, especially although not exclusively women, countered the prevailing white attitudes toward black female sexuality in various ways, including participating in church disciplinary hearings, either as willing defendants or voting members of church conference meetings. The records of two of Savannah's elite black Baptist churches—First African and Second Baptist—show ten instances where individuals were brought before the board of deacons and the church congregations on charges of adultery or "fornication" during the interwar years (for which they engaged in the same ritual dance of confession and repentance as other transgressors described above). Of the ten church members summoned to appear before the deacon board, only one was male—Brother Peter Frazier, a member of the East Savannah Prayer House.[36] While it is reasonable to assume that some of the men in question were not members of the same church or prayer house, it is doubtful that Frazier was the only male member of First African's faith community who had engaged in illicit fornication. This double standard for punishment of extramarital sexual relationships sheds light on the specific problems faced by black women in a social order that was framed by a universal belief that women were guardians of morality and virtue. Assuming that was so, by extension they were harbingers of civilization and deemed responsible for all moral transgression, whether they were directly involved or not. In the context of this worldview, punishing men for sexual wrongdoing would have been like putting Band-Aids on bullet holes.

It is not surprising that black women supported penalties for female profligacy. Their aspirations to achieve middle-class notions of respectability involved countering the image of themselves as seductresses. Church discipline of women who engaged in illicit sexual activity was consistent with the black churches' attempts to desexualize black women and render them invisible to white men—and all white southerners. Cities offered black women opportunities they did not have elsewhere; they were also sexually dangerous places. Domestic workers—as many members of the elite black Baptist churches

were—were especially vulnerable to sexual violence in the white households in which they worked. White adult male household members forced themselves with impunity on black women who labored in their homes, raising their children, cooking their meals, washing their dirty clothes, and pressing their clean clothes. Violence against black domestic workers was a raw expression of the power white men held over black southerners.[37] White men were reasonably assured that in whatever strategy of dominance they adopted, they would never lose the upper hand. The only consequences they might face for forcing themselves on their families' black domestic workers would be personal (an angry spouse or parent), not legal. The relationship between Strom Thurmond and Carrie Butler may not have constituted rape; but it was not a courtship either. It was a display of white supremacy and the blatant power that Thurmond held over Butler, her kin, and all black southerners. Black women who submitted to the sexual double standard of justice in their churches paid a price for their protection; namely their voluntary desexualization. But what they gained in terms of self-respect and respect from members of their faith communities was priceless.

Holy Wars

As World War I came to a close, First African, like other urban southern churches in the period, was still mostly concerned with eschatological and other spiritual matters. While church leaders engaged in civic leadership, explicitly *political* work was as yet another story. The black women, who got out the vote following the ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution, were active members of their Baptist faith communities; yet the churches themselves remained detached from their efforts. The civic leadership furnished by First African and the other mainline black Baptist churches fit well within the framework of the ideology of uplift and self-help that characterized the age of Booker T. Washington. Rather than engaging with the political apparatus to address uneven distributions of political power, church leaders busied themselves implementing educational programs like "Negro Health Week," an annual rite of spring sponsored by the late Washington's National Negro Business League. In the words of its organizers, Negro Health Week was "a crusade, not only in personal education for Health but more broadly for homes and surroundings that are safe against the ravages of disease, of fire, and the weather."[38]

As entrenched as these strategies for self-improvement were by the 1920s, not all church members were singularly attached to them as the only course for advancement. Church members and leaders were more than the aggregate sum of their faith communities. As southern urban centers continued

to diversify institutionally, they were members of other communities that sometimes collided head on with their churches. Communities of faith were intricate fields of social interaction, fraught with tension between the institutional imperative for social order and an endless variety of finely distinguishable situations and extravagantly different ones. Expanding opportunities for education among the rising middle classes exacerbated competition between churchly and worldly imperatives. Churches were composed of groups of individuals—each one with his own will. And social interactions were constantly improvised. As the anthropologist Victor Turner wrote, social order in any community never fully takes over.[39] Nowhere was the tendency toward chaos that emerged from a continuing clash of rival interests more clearly demonstrated than at First African Baptist Church in the 1920s. Then First African was wracked by social conflict so severe that it very nearly tore the church apart. At issue was who was going to lead the church and how.

The first evidence of conflict appeared in 1920 when Deacon F. S. Belcher, a medical doctor, came before the deacon board "to give a reason why he failed" to attend board meetings and church worship services over the previous half year, "as was required of him in his official capacity." Belcher charged Pastor Thomas Jefferson Goodall "with derelict[ion] of duty in his official capacity." Details of Belcher's accusations were not included in the board meeting minutes, nor the substance of Goodall's "counter explanation," but the deacons recommended "for the good of the cause, and the future harmony between the pastor and the Board of Deacons, that Deacon Belcher tender his resignation." The tossing of Belcher did not result in the church harmony that Goodall and the rest of First African leadership had anticipated. Goodall was finding it increasingly difficult to get along with other members of the deacon board, where the balance of power was arranged against him. In 1922 he made "a very earnest appeal" to the board for "more support" in "the furtherance of the church programme." He requested a salary increase, more ordained deacons, and a new assistant pastor to "stimulate" the church's three prayer houses. The death of several deacons while still in office, argued Goodall, and two other sitting deacons who "were by physical disability superanimated," made "the condition more complexed." Around the same time, Goodall received a call to the Second Baptist Church of Germantown, then a suburb of Philadelphia, which he tried to use as a bargaining chip. "Intense excitement followed," and Goodall, who had been in the pulpit since 1915, became the first pastor during the church's 150 years of existence to leave First African by a vote of the church.[40]

Deteriorating interactions between the deacons and the pastor inside First African may well have been an isolated circumstance, little more than

a personality conflict, an agonistic striving, or a twist of fate with little social significance. But First African's problems over leadership did not end there. Conflict and crisis would wreak havoc on the church for much of the 1920s. A reading of the history of the church backward in time through the imprecise and often incomplete church records, the black weekly, and even civil court records suggests that the turmoil that led to Goodall's ouster was in no small measure a result of personality clashes, and at least partially a consequence of the larger social changes that were occurring in the city and the church's efforts to make the difficult but necessary adjustments to them. For as long as anyone could remember, First African's relationship to the city of Savannah was exceptionally expansive. As the city changed, becoming more populous with a rising educated black middle class and the appearance of new secular financial and even political organizations, the church's relationship to the city became strained. The crisis over church leadership was contagious; once it erupted, it went far beyond the deacons' chambers. The *Tribune* reported that fully two-thirds of the congregants defended their pastor and his ministry; and Goodall's successor to FAB, Rev. E. G. Thomas, wrote in a history of the church several years later that many members attempted "to stage a comeback for the former shepherd." They "did not cease to agitate," and during the course of the next three months thirty members were summoned to appear before the board of deacons for refusing to partake of the Lord's Supper, which was served by the deacons. Eventually "with a firm hand" the officers quieted the "intense friction and much feeling." But Goodall's friends and followers had "hearts" that were "stout and rebellious," and "they would yield to no reasoning, showing no sign of even being sorry for having failed to take their communion." The deacon board expelled twenty-five of the insurgents and summoned many more to stand before them for "the peace and harmony of the church."[41]

While it would be an oversimplification to apply a strict binary division between sacred and secular to the elite mainline black Baptist churches whose pastors historically assumed varying degrees of civic leadership, in the quarter century before World War II some church members seemed to be gently nudging their churches away from a strictly internal focus and toward a broader view of themselves in the larger world. The Venerable Archdeacon J. Henry Brown of Saint Stephen's Episcopal Church identified the reshaping of the contours of the sacred and the secular and the seeds of this change when he paid tribute to Goodall at the end of his tenure at First African. "This is a new day, a new church day," said Brown. "The church of today must compete with the lodges, clubs, movies and every other thing."[42] Brown identified a significant cultural shift in black Savannah, a move toward secularization that

had been taking place so gradually that it was barely noticeable. Traces of the older style of church leadership that corresponded with the institutional primacy of the black churches in their communities lingered alongside a set of expectations for what the churches should accomplish in members' lives, as well as in the city at large. These expectations mingled with newer, more modern principles that a younger, more educated leadership brought with them.

The unrest in First African eventually calmed down, and the church officers began to search for a new pastor. Edgar Garfield Thomas arrived well prepared to fill the pulpit of a struggling urban church. He held a bachelor's of divinity degree from Morehouse College in Atlanta, and prior to his most recent position in Bainbridge, Georgia, he had led the historic Tabernacle Baptist Church in Augusta; and before that he was the principal of the Twin City Seminary. Thomas was a good choice for a discordant community that needed a leader with diplomatic skills. While at Bainbridge he proved himself capable of mediating among the notorious egotistical Baptist ministers as president of that city's Baptist Ministers Union. He had also served as district secretary of the State Baptist Convention of the Second Congressional District.[43]

Before First African hired the young pastor from Bainbridge, they apprised him of "the bitter feeling of the church." In his trial sermon Thomas laid out his formula for church administration in an address entitled "Deacons and Their Relations to Pastor and Church." The text of the sermon has not survived, but Thomas apparently passed muster, for not only was his oration "happily received," the deacons extended to him a call "by unanimous vote." Upon assuming the pulpit Thomas achieved what his predecessor had been unable to do. He effectively shifted the balance of power on the deacon board away from the old guard and in the direction of the younger generation that was more educated, more urbane, and less troubled by the shifting relationship between the Church and Savannah. He ordained three young deacons, and re-ordained F. S. Belcher—who would become one of his closest allies. Seven months later Thomas expanded the board with eight new trial members. While the composition of the deacon board now had youth and education on its side, it was dominated by Chairman George Binyard, a staunch member of the old guard.[44]

Binyard ran the deacon board with an iron fist. By trade, he was a "painter and decorator," and while not an educated man, many of those who served alongside him were. Belcher was a medical doctor, and J. S. Delaware and C. B. Burson—two of the new trial deacons—held degrees from Georgia State College. Mount Zion's pastor, John Q. Adams (a graduate of More-

house), suspected that Binyard believed the younger, educated deacons were smug and overly confident—and not deferential enough to the older generation. Binyard's lack of formal education might well have caused him to feel insecure and behave abrasively toward First African's pastors. Adams recalled the days in the 1920s when "my folks would go and kneel with" First African when the pastor communed the church, and First African "folks would come to me on the third Sunday" for Mount Zion's communion. Sometimes, said Adams, Binyard would join First African's entourage at Mount Zion, and he was "just as arrogant as he could be." Once Binyard picked fights with several Mount Zion members as he took up the offering. His minimal schooling and his position as the chairman of the deacon board was "just enough to [make him] cranky," recalled Adams, but not enough to give him confidence. "Even his own people knew that he was mean."[45]

Thomas's public ministry was dynamic from the start and had a fearless quality to it. This was the high point of Jim Crow in Savannah and the rest of the Deep South. Segregation laws had been on the books long enough to give them a timeless quality but not long enough so that racial separation had already been achieved in every corner of public life. Three weeks after arriving at First African, Thomas joined a local committee to protest the introduction of Jim Crow at Union Station, which prohibited black patrons from using the revolving doors located at the main entrance on West Broad Street. Within days a committee of black clergy and business leaders saw to it that the "White Waiting Room" sign was removed along with the officer "in all his glory" whose job was to prevent black travelers from entering the station. Several years later, when a twenty-four-year-old black man, Robert Smith, was lynched for allegedly attacking two young white girls and raping one in Rockyford, Georgia, it was Thomas who wrote a letter to Governor Clifford Walker entitled "The Bane of our Commonwealth," which appeared in the *Savannah Tribune* signed by leading black clergy. The letter described in shocking detail the festival of lynching, which involved bloodhounds, a mob of a thousand murderers, and men and women of the "dominant race" who laughed as Robert Smith took his last tortured breath. Thomas demanded that Walker bring the laughing lynchers to justice.[46]

While Thomas found support for his public ministry, like Goodall before him, he was never able to consolidate his leadership in First African. In a 1924 discussion with his deacons entitled "Some Essential Spiritual Attitudes," the pastor stressed the need for the deacons to exhibit "Admiration for and Devotion" to their pastor. But his efforts did not produce the desired effects. Over the next year and half the discord that had started as a conflict between two factions on the deacon board deepened, and in March

1926 Thomas and his supporters attempted to resolve the crisis by recommending to the church conference that four deacons, including Chairman Binyard and David Smalls—who presided over the East Savannah Prayer House—be purged from the board for "regularly opposing practically every progressive plan of the administration" and keeping "a large percent of the members in a state of restlessness and inactivity." For two years the conflict ricocheted between the church and her Prayer House before moving beyond the Baptist faith community and landing squarely in the Chatham County courthouse. In the end, white Baptists would be called in to settle the dispute. Church members in the Prayer House and the Mother Church did not take the "retirement" of their lay leaders lying down. At the Prayer House seven were punished for "disturbing the worship" and "clearly" not "abid[ing] by the mandates of the church." At the regular church conference eight months later the two factions were still at war. By this time the disagreement was over who would lead the church. The pro- and anti-Thomas factions fired a rapid volley of resolutions, one side led by Deacon Belcher affirming their "loyal and undivided support for the pastor," and the other led by Deacons Binyard and Joseph W. Marks recommending that Thomas be dispatched along the same road (out of Savannah) traveled by Goodall five years earlier. "After much discussion and amid [a] storm of confusion" Binyard and Marks's motion demanding Thomas's resignation was carried, 122 in favor and 84 opposed. Thomas and Belcher accused Marks and Binyard of dirty politics, specifically "going around secretly" and "get[ting] up sufficient numbers of persons, including watch care members and members not in good standing," to vote against Thomas. Binyard and Marks countered with claims that Thomas made "a house to house canvass" and threatened to "show those opposed to him how to fight." Two months later, in "a war like church conference," two "female members drew knives and one a pair of scissors," and Binyard "threatened to slap" Belcher. Deacon Emanuel K. Greene, who opposed Thomas, "admitted" in a court deposition "that he did threaten to beat" Deacon Charles Stewart, a Thomas supporter, for making "ugly remarks about several of the deacons who were aligned with him in his fight against the pastor."[47]

The erstwhile ritual of discipline and punishment, which in the past had smoothed over the dissonant social processes that perpetually threatened the cohesion of community, could no longer stand up to the conflict, which after a while took on a life of its own. The dual principles of participatory democracy and social order that in the best of times operated like a delicate balancing act had run amok. Both sides strained to achieve harmony—the Binyard faction by giving the pastor the boot and the Thomas and Belcher

faction by looking toward the civil courts for redress. In the end, First African turned to a third party to help restore stability. Thomas and Belcher won the battle, but they would lose the war. Following the "war like conference," Thomas and fifteen of his supporters secured a court injunction to prevent additional attempts by his opponents to dismiss him. The *Savannah Tribune*, which had previously supported Thomas and his fight to remain in First African's pulpit, vehemently opposed involving the Chatham County courts. The court order, read an editorial, "proves that some of us are incapable of self-government." In appealing to the civil courts to resolve the conflicts in the church, Thomas and his supporters effectively cast their lot in the secular world. Binyard tried to draw the conflict back into the sacred realm where civil law was ineffectual. He proposed that the court organize a council of white and black Baptist ministers to hear the case in the offices of the white First Baptist Church. The presiding judge, Peter W. Meldrim, adopted a version of Binyard's suggestion, assigning three pastors from the main white Baptist churches in Savannah—but no members of the city's black clergy—to hear the case and make recommendations. Infuriated, Thomas said, "the time had not come to have [our] matters handled by white people."[48]

On the surface Thomas appears disingenuous since it was he who involved the white Chatham County court system in the first place. But there could be another way to view this. In petitioning the courts the pro-Thomas faction made a distinction between secular and religious authority, and they demonstrated a willingness to defer to the former in some matters. Since slavery black churches had been the only institutions accessible to black southerners, and they took on a range of responsibilities that went far beyond spiritual mission. Thomas's turn to civil authority reflected the ever-increasing diversification of black social and organizational life that included financial institutions and other black businesses, secular entertainment venues, and even some political groups that were created and sustained independent of the churches. For the first time, black Savannahians were less dependent on their churches to fulfill a whole range of human aspirations. In appealing to the courts, Thomas and his supporters were not merely reaching out to white government, but to the principle of civil authority. In placing their confidence in secular law, they were stepping beyond the confines of the insulated sacred world. Moreover, the "white people" Thomas angrily referred to were not just any white people. They were white southern Baptists with a long history of using religious precepts to back up their subjugation of black southerners.

After hearing the case, the white clergy determined that both sides engaged in "irregularities" and arranged a second general conference election under their supervision to determine Thomas's destiny. About six hundred

members—more than three times the number that voted the first time around—turned up. Rev. John E. White, a white pastor from the court-appointed committee, George A. Cargill, Judge Meldrim's secretary, and a deputy sheriff from the Superior Court supervised the vote. Rev. A. S. Dunbar, moderator of the black Mount Olive Baptist Association, of which First African was a member, was present as well. The church took a voice vote on whether the pastor should be asked to resign. After all the names on the clerk's roll were called, Dunbar asked all those who had not been called to step forward. About a hundred members rose, and Dunbar could not help but be startled by the "forward moving avalanche of forgotten members." After the voting was sorted out, Thomas and his supporters lost their battle by a vote of 170 to 131.[49] For the second time in six years First African's pastor was removed from the pulpit in the midst of agonizing rupture.

It took more than a year after Thomas was voted out of the church for order to be fully restored. In the interim there were a few more casualties. The records show more than a few members requesting "letters of dismission" so they could "connect with other churches." One Sunday afternoon in October while the church was searching for a new pastor, Deacon J. T. Milton (one of the younger deacons who had supported Thomas) told "a crowd outside the church" who the deacon board planned to recommend for the position. Word got back to the board, and Milton was taken to task for his reckless chatter. Milton confessed his indiscretion and then began to attack the board and its chairman. Binyard, he said, ran the church like a "Zarr," and his sidekick, Joseph Marks (who was now taking the board's minutes as church clerk), was a "Kaiser." The board meeting then got "uncontrolible [*sic*]." Binyard stood up and lunged toward Milton, who hastily stepped behind a chair and adopted a fighting stance. At that point "several deacons got in between" the two men "to avoid any further Trouble." Once order was restored, Binyard said to Milton, "you are hereby cited to meet the Discipline Board on Tuesday Night without fail to answer the charge of acting unbecoming a Decon [*sic*]." Four months later Milton was "droped [*sic*] from the Board of Deacons for the good of the cause" when he was discovered "going around with a petition" and collecting signatures from "members who are not in Harmony with the church."[50]

In 1931 Rev. J. A. Wilson became the pastor of First African. Binyard, Marks, and the older deacons at long last established order in the church but at the expense of the younger, more educated deacons. Of the seven deacons who had supported Thomas, only one remained. A few took sabbaticals, and at least one was dropped from the church roster for joining another church. F. S. Belcher disappeared entirely from First African and from the

church pages of the *Tribune*. In 1930 he was elected to the executive board of the newly reorganized Savannah chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People—which had first appeared in the city in the early 1920s but lay dormant for the rest of the decade. J. S. Delaware never dropped his membership during the years of conflict—although he joined the rebellion, and for that he was disciplined. He split his energy—but not his allegiances—between First African and the NAACP. He directed the Men's Division of the NAACP, served as superintendent of First African's Sunday school, and became chairman of the board of the Boys' Club of Savannah (known informally as Frank Callen's Boys' Club).[51] It is hardly surprising that neither George Binyard nor Joseph Marks appeared on the NAACP rosters—or any roster that emerged from the secular political world. A critical difference between the old order and the insurgents on the deacon board was that the Young Turks were beginning to look beyond the potential of their church for group advancement and to engage in explicitly political protest. That all of the dissident deacons participated in the ritual of church discipline, including Thomas's strongest ally, F. S. Belcher, demonstrates a loyalty to the church and its fellowship, if not to the church under its then current leadership. The battle in First African highlights the process of laicization, not a waning of faith claims or religiosity. Younger church leaders sought redress in a court system that was not organized to support biblical injunctions but secular justice.

Rev. E. G. Thomas was gone but not forgotten. He did not abandon his sacred commitment to Georgia's black Baptists or his mission of kingdom building. Thomas became the director of publicity for Georgia's black State Baptist Convention's Central City College near Macon. The same year that Wilson came to First African, John S. Delaware, who had boycotted the church following Thomas's resignation, was recommended and accepted for ordination. Deacon Binyard passed away in 1938, marking the end of an era at First African. The following year the board of deacons, which was by then dominated by the likes of Delaware and his generation, invited Rev. T. J. Goodall, who had been forced to resign seventeen years earlier, to preach the church's 151st anniversary sermon.[52]

The Secularization of Black Savannah

The change in First African's cast of characters, especially the choices the dissidents made and the directions so many took out of the church, augured the beginning of a larger cultural transformation; namely, the secularization of black Savannah. The divergence of sacred and secular worlds is laid bare through the discernible shifts in mainline black Baptist church discipline

during the 1930s. While individuals were still brought before deacon boards for transgressing church rules, discipline was far more sporadic; 1930 was the last year on record that the deacons at First African summoned members to answer to the charge of "denying the [Baptist] faith." Of thirty-three members brought before the general conference at Second Baptist between 1931 and 1942, only one was expelled. Even Bishop Grace inspired little ardor in the 1930s. In 1931 Sister Sarah DeCrutcher was the only member on record who was summoned to appear before Second Baptist's church tribunal for attending Grace's tent meetings. It turned out that in January 1928 DeCrutcher had been dropped from the Poor Saints list "for forsaking the church," and her defense three years later—"that her whole object for attending Bishop Grace[']s church was if possible to be cured"—was accepted by the deacon board. She was not punished, as might have been her destiny a few years earlier. In the 1940s, Grace continued to draw thousands of curious spectators and followers to his parades, mass baptisms, and services, including members of the city's mainline black Baptist churches. Matthew Southhall Brown, then a young member of First African—who would grow up to become pastor of Saint John Baptist Church—recalled attending the spectacular processions and ceremonies for "the horns, the pomp and the circumstance and to see the reaction of the people."[53] By then there was no fear of ecclesiastical repercussion.

This new tolerance was reflected in Savannah's black weekly as well. In the 1920s the *Tribune* attacked Grace not only for his ostentatious and spirited worship style but also for his doctrine. In 1931 it admiringly editorialized about Grace's annual visit to Savannah: the "parade is well organized[,] the marching was unusually good, the appearance favorable and the deportment exceptional." Grace's services and parades were the same raucous affairs they had been in 1926 when the *Tribune* joined mainline Christian leaders in an effort to silence him. Now, however, what the *Tribune* appreciated best was the great display of fellowship among Grace's followers that was matched by their generous monetary support. "It is true that there are many persons who look with disfavor on this religious sect but all should unselfishly give them credit for their solidarity and the loyal way in which the members respond to the calls made upon them." The *Tribune* encouraged imitation, the highest form of flattery. "If the liberal financial response and loyalty to their cause shown by these people could be emulated by those of other denominations this would be an entirely different community." In 1939 when Grace conducted his annual revival in Savannah, the event elicited little more than passing interest despite the approximately fifteen hundred participants and the parade leading to the public Baptism, which was "Seen by Thousands."[54]

The new attitude toward Bishop Grace and the softening of church discipline more generally accompanied thinning church congregations and diminishing financial support. Black southerners continued to travel north to take advantage of education and work opportunities, and with the onset of the Great Depression, church members' already overstretched resources were further strained. Declining wages and rising living costs did not bode well for struggling black churches. In 1927 the local Berean Baptist Association offered statistical details on declining church membership. Minutes of the deacon board at Second Baptist, moreover, depict a protracted financial crisis. In 1929 the church disconnected its telephone in order to save money, and the gas was turned off. Relentless financial hardship forced the church to make a choice between fulfilling its missionary faith claims and survival. In 1930, in order to keep the church organist from resigning, which would have been "classed as a great handycap [*sic*] to building up and maintaining a good choir"—and church morale—the deacon board recommended to the general conference that the church "eliminate the collection for Africa" so that "a special collection be lifted on each 2nd Lords day for the department of music." Second Baptist, frequently unable to pay its minister for months at a time, became a veritable revolving door between 1929 and 1936: every few years the pastor resigned. In 1936, shortly after Rev. Ivory Washington Collins arrived, "attention of the Conference was called to the fact of the pastor sleeping in the church." Church members expressed "anger and disapproval," and most likely they were humiliated, too, for they failed to "pay him what [the church] owes him." In 1937 Second Baptist was still unable to pay Collins his back salary, and the pastor took a job as a waiter at the De Soto Hotel. Several months later he left the church—and Savannah.[55]

Financial hardship forced the churches to rearrange their priorities. Instead of discipline and punishment—which effectively led to loss of revenue from tithing and church rallies—they began to search for ways to welcome erstwhile members back into the fold. In 1930 Sister S. Hendrickson of Second Baptist explained to the general conference "that the church should try to bring those members back who left with grievances."[56] In 1939 Deacon J. W. Roberts "suggested a meeting to be held to inspire those who do not attend church, sort of a homecoming affair." Although the moderator suggested that "we leave off action at this time and take it up in the near future," the shift in some deacons' willingness to respond to non-attendance with a ritual of welcome and not one of shame and repentance suggests the beginning of a new era in the relationship between the church and its community. In 1942, still concerned with the problem of declining membership, Deacon Gibson suggested that the church figure out ways to entice those who failed to ap-

pear in church. "How are you going to get people to attend if you do not have anything to offer?" he asked. Deacon Roundfield, from the old school, unyielding on questions of biblical injunction, countered that question when he said, "those members going all around to night . . . clubs and other pleasures but not to church" should not be rewarded for their behavior.[57]

The decline in church discipline in the mainline black Baptist churches and the open-mindedness toward Grace among Savannah's black elites had paradoxical implications. New tolerances accompanied a weakening in the interclass fellowship that formed the basis of nationalism. The beginnings of social stratification in elite black Baptist churches accompanied a tendency toward interracial church fellowship. This new racial liberalism was evidence of a burgeoning pluralism and a middle-class and elite retreat from the principle of uplifting those who lacked education and commensurate social standing. The nationalist project of forging interclass fellowship links declined as racial liberalism expanded. Elite black Baptists in Savannah felt less threatened by Grace and his affronts to Baptist doctrine because they were identifying their aspirations for advancement less with Grace's followers and more with those of their own social standing.

Decline of Black Christian Nationalism

The 1920s was the last decade for which expressions of interclass fellowship in the churches were unwavering. In 1925 First African Baptist marked its 137th year of existence with a weeklong celebration. Every night a minister from a different black Baptist church delivered a "keynote" sermon. One night it was S. D. Ross from Second Baptist sermonizing on "The Church," and the next night J. S. Irby of Central Baptist delivered the main homily. On another night Rev. N. C. Connor, then of Union Baptist, packed the church with listeners eager to behold firsthand the preaching reputation that preceded him.[58] The inclusion of the comparatively well-heeled and educated pastor of Second Baptist on the same roster as the now aging Rev. J. S. Irby, who had been born into slavery in rural Georgia in 1850, was a tangible manifestation of the interclass fellowship that had sustained Black Christian Nationalism.

This interclass expression appeared not only in the churches but even in secular ecumenical rituals like the 1926 "international wedding" that underscored the sanctity of marriage while suggesting black Christians' sense of themselves as a nation within a nation. Like First African's anniversary celebration the previous year, this event brought together the relatively privileged and more humble from all of the city's black denominations. Elite Congregationalists and Episcopalians entered into a friendly competition that celebrated interclass and interdenominational black fellowship with evangeli-

cal African Methodist Episcopals and Baptists. Twenty-three churches sent "wedding parties" to the City Auditorium, each outfitted to evoke a national theme: Beth Eden Baptist sent a "Canadian Flapper" wedding party, Second Baptist members arrived as a tony "English Tennis Wedding" party, while other churches sent Italian, Brazilian, and Palestinian wedding parties. The panel of judges included some of the city's most distinguished black men. Professor R. W. Gadsden of Georgia State Industrial College, J. H. Hubert who taught at Cuyler Junior High, Attorney J. G. Lemon, and C. H. Porter, M.D., decided the winner based on "the most attractive bride and bride-maids" and team spirit that was measured by the number of spectators representing each church.[59]

If the 1920s can be characterized as the beginning of the end of the era of interclass black fellowship and Black Christian Nationalism, in the following decade the beginning of class stratification becomes discernible. The mainline black Baptist churches began to pull away from the more marginal churches in ritual and fellowship, and they ceased their efforts to influence those churches whose ritual practices and church leadership resonated most with rural migrants and other members of the working classes. At the same time, they began to form fellowship ties with some willing white Baptists. In early 1934 First Bryan Baptist celebrated its 146th anniversary with two white ministers, John S. Wilder of Calvary Temple Baptist Church and Arthur Jackson of the First Baptist Church, who delivered the main address. In order to assuage white Savannahians' anxieties about racial integration—for whom racial egalitarianism meant interracial sexual liaison and miscegenation involving black men and white women—and anticipating the postwar civil rights movement, First Bryan's pastor, L. M. Glenn, assured his listeners that "what the Negro wants is not social equality but social justice." The following year, First African celebrated its 147th anniversary with Jackson—although the white minister was not awarded the distinction of delivering the anniversary sermon. That honor was bestowed on John J. Starks, the first black president of Benedict College, a school for black southerners started by the American Baptist Home Missionary Society in 1870 in Columbia, South Carolina. Absent was the usual clerical representation from the younger and more marginal black Baptist churches. The only invited black member of the clergy to participate in the event was A. T. Clarke, pastor of Saint Paul's Colored Methodist Episcopal Church.[60]

In 1935 First Bryan held its installation services for its new pastor, L. M. Terrell, in the company of elite black intellectuals. James M. Nabrit, a graduate of Morehouse when it was still called Atlanta Baptist College, one of the first professors at Central City College in 1899 and now president of

the State Missionary Baptist Convention, preached the installation sermon. Other participants included Archdeacon J. Henry Brown of Saint Stephen's Episcopal Church, Rev. John Q. Adams, a graduate of Morehouse and a teacher and preacher, and Rev. N. C. Clarke, pastor of Beth Eden Baptist and a local public intellectual who wrote frequently on denominational matters in Savannah's black newspaper and *The Georgia Baptist*, the organ of the state Baptist convention.[61] Gone were the days, it seemed, when the large, influential churches embraced the more marginal ones led by men with more faith than formal schooling.

If the elite black churches pulled away from the younger and more modest faith communities, the smaller and more marginal churches with solid working-class membership sustained this re-arrangement during their rites of passage when they congregated among themselves. Emmanuel Baptist Church, organized in 1926 by Rev. McMillan, "a barber by trade," along with seven stalwart saints, finally erected its own building in 1934. A year later, at the cornerstone ceremony, which dedicated the church building on Huntingdon Street near Price, Rev. E. D. Davis, pastor of Tabernacle Baptist, preached the dedicatory sermon. All of the churches that were represented at the important event for the young church—Mount Hermon, Saint Peter's, Jerusalem, Bethlehem, and Second Bethlehem—were small, marginal, and distinctively working class. None of the elite or even "second tier" Baptist churches participated.[62]

One other missing constituent of the previous arrangement that characterized Black Christian Nationalism was business leaders. When black business life in Savannah was at its zenith, businessmen showed up everywhere it mattered, including church celebrations, commemorations, and other functions at the leading black Baptist churches. They brought with them the conviction that successful business had sacred and secular redemptive powers to uplift and carry forward all segments of the black city. Salvation was rooted in the city's three local black-owned banks, the last of which failed in 1929. With the demise of the material underpinning of Black Christian Nationalism, an analogue to the waning interclass fellowship, elite black professionals were less likely to view business as the cornerstone of spiritual prosperity, racial uplift, and material and legal equality. The relationship between economic institutions and churches that flowered since 1900 had been more interdependent and programmatic than reductive and deterministic. The black-owned banks had been involved in every aspect of black institutional progress and had consequently helped shape a consciousness of secular redemption. With the collapse of the banks, black Savannahians did not abandon this dual understanding, which by then had become deeply engrained. Their belief in a

binary secular and sacred struggle for a better future continued to shape their social reality; only the secular began to have more overtly political overtones. The rise of the re-organized NAACP and a local secular organization called the Chatham County Colored Citizens Council—known as the "Five C's"—demanded, for example, from municipal government a public high school for black students.[63] With the failure of the banks, Savannah's black religious leaders did not abandon life-long positions and principles. They still believed in that earthly heaven called equality and justice, but their approach to it was becoming less insular and inwardly focused on their own community development. The secularization of black Savannah was accompanied by a reconfiguration of black leadership that began to mount political challenges to external structures of racial injustice and oppression.

As World War II drew near, the traditional authority of ecclesiastical elites in believers' everyday lives had weakened substantially. The institutional structures of church discipline and interchurch denominational surveillance committees had vanished. While the insularity of black Savannah that had emerged primarily from church life was fading, it would be inaccurate to suggest that religion and church life were no longer important in the lives of black Savannahians. By 1939 Baptist identity was no less important than it had been earlier, but the role of the churches in people's lives was changing. The institutional primacy of the black churches in their communities had given way to more secular institutional diversification. With the weakening of Black Christian Nationalism, Savannah, like other black communities across the South, stood at the precipice of the civil rights movement, ready to engage its churches in political struggles for equality. In the years following World War II, church lay and ordained leaders would make their churches ready to wage war on inequality and injustice for the first time since Reconstruction.

EPILOGUE

FROM BLACK CHRISTIAN NATIONALISM TO CIVIL RIGHTS

In December 1935 the Social Clubs Union withdrew from Savannah's Emancipation Association, the organization that for years had been dominated by the clergy and had taken charge of planning the parade and celebration marking the end of slavery. "Like a lightening bolt from a clear sky," read a front-page report in the *Savannah Tribune*, the association "struck a snarling rock." R. B. Howard, a spokesman for the union, explained: "the clergy refuses to allow us to have any part in naming a speaker and drawing up the program." Moreover, he said, they "refused to consider any man as eligible for the first of January speaker unless he is a member of one or the other of two denominations that have the largest membership among our group in the city," meaning the Baptists and the Methodists.[1]

In a display of public unity, one parade was planned for the 1936 celebration, which was to commence, as usual, from West Broad and Gwinnett streets, before branching off into two separate ceremonies. Those who favored tradition could attend the clergy's "literary exercises" that were planned for Saint Philip A.M.E. Church. The more secular Social Clubs Union retreated to Butler Presbyterian. Notwithstanding Howard's grievance with Savannah's clergy, keynote speakers at both observances came from one of the

elite mainline black Baptist churches: Rev. L. M. Terrell, who had recently assumed the pulpit at First Bryan Baptist, gave the address at Saint Philip, and Ivory W. Collins, pastor of Second Baptist, spoke to those assembled at Butler Presbyterian. Nothing so clearly illustrates the shifting relationship between the sacred and the secular than this split. As the program organized by the Social Clubs Union shows, the secularization of black Savannah ought not be interpreted as a banning of religion. It was more about tolerance and choice and liberty to choose who made the rules, who governed, and how. What it really refers to is a universal proposition of modernity—a separation of church and state.

The divergent celebrations suggest that the split between the two factions was over the broader meaning of freedom; each celebration expressed a distinct view of black leadership and black activism. The celebration sponsored by the clergy was short and to the point. It included a reading from the Scriptures, a singing of the "National Negro Anthem," a reading of the Emancipation Proclamation, and Terrell's "principle address." The remembrance at Butler Presbyterian, while not devoid of religion, was less insular and included speeches by attorney T. J. Hopkins, president of the local chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, and J. G. Lemon, also an attorney, who delivered an address entitled "The New Deal." The singing of "America" was on the program just before the "Negro National Anthem," a poignant expression of the tightrope black southerners walked between two nations, one still off-limits and the other not quite free.[2] If Savannah's "pre-modern" sacred social order could be characterized as insular with a strong measure of interclass Christian fellowship and a focus on racial uplift as the ticket to freedom, the emerging newer order was less constrained and blinkered, more political, and even embraced the individualism, however cautiously, that characterizes liberal bourgeois societies.

The story of black Baptists in Savannah—and black evangelical Christianity more generally—from the end of the Civil War until the eve of World War II depicts not only a growing secularization, but also the weakening of Black Christian Nationalism. In 1928 the city's most powerful black-owned institution, the Wage Earners Savings Bank, failed, and with it went some of the certainty about the transformative and even redemptive powers of business. This was not the city's first black bank to fail. Fourteen months earlier the Mechanics Savings Bank bit the dust. But this failure was worse. The Wage Earners had seemed indestructible; its borrowers and depositors were as far away as New York City. *The Crisis* magazine once called it the most important black-owned bank in the country. The collapse of the Wage Earners led black Savannah into a spiritual crisis, and so it was fitting that Savannah's

Interdenominational Ministers Union was the first to respond. Within days of the bank's collapse the ministers organized a "memorial to our people." At a second gathering the following week, this one sponsored by the clergy and the Savannah branch of the Negro Business League, more than seven hundred "mourners," including church leaders, political leaders, and business leaders, squeezed into First African Baptist to hear Second Baptist's Rev. S. D. Ross eulogize the bank. Clinging to the principle of black business as the "savior" of black Savannah, Ross affirmed his "abiding faith" in the Savannah Savings Bank, the city's remaining black-owned bank. If the Savings Bank were to follow the Wage Earners' fate, said Ross, it would subject "Negro women and men to the same humiliations, insults and ignomies [*sic*] many of us suffered in the days when there were no Negro banks." Ross appealed to his listeners to adopt as their slogan "I'll Save the Savannah Savings and the Savannah Savings'll Save Me."[3]

Black Savannahians' efforts to save the bank were in the end unsuccessful. The failure of the four black-owned banks accompanied a decline of black business more generally. Not surprisingly, it also strained the Christian nationalist worldview that emphasized the sacred and secular possibility of redemption. As long as the ideal of Black Christian Nationalism prevailed, middle-class black Savannahians remained inward looking, focusing their efforts on community uplift and development. Connected to this were mainline black Baptist church authorities' efforts to strengthen their faith communities by exercising ecclesiastical, denominational, social, and even personal control over the lives of their members. In the 1920s black leaders did not make aggressive demands on white authorities in Savannah or on government structures of power. Even the language of the women, and the men who supported them in their quest for black representation in the body politic, conformed to the standards of the day. They emphasized lessons in citizenship and political morality, seldom demanding a reversal of legislative disfranchisement, the exclusion of black workers from the best jobs, the dearth of public educational institutions for black Savannahians in the separate and unequal system, and other forms of injustice.

By definition, nationalism serves as a bridge between elites and masses: it requires some convergence of circumstances and efforts from above and below. The decline in the material foundation of Black Christian Nationalism that accompanied a weakening of the churches in black communities, and the rise of a new liberalism and religious tolerance brought about an openness in the churches that included leaders engaging in new kinds of political activity. This is not to say that church and religion was no longer important in the lives of black Savannahians. Quite the contrary. As both Emancipation Day

celebrations in 1936 demonstrate, religion and church leadership continued to be influential in Savannah's civic life—as indeed they are to this day—but their influence was tempered by the appearance of more secular and overtly political organizations. To be sure, the city's black population was no less "churched" in 1939 than it had been two decades earlier: the ratio between Baptist churches and black Savannah actually increased by 14 percent between 1920 and 1940.[4] Perhaps this statistic explains why after taking leave of the clergy's organization, the Social Clubs Union placed a Baptist minister at the helm of its Emancipation Day observance.

The federal government, while adhering to a rigorous policy of noninterference in the South, tacitly supported policies that promoted white supremacy. During the first two decades of the twentieth century, this policy of benign neglect increasingly gave way to antiblack judicial, legislative, and executive action, including the Supreme Court's interpretation of the constitutional principles embodied in the Fourteenth Amendment as a defense of laissez-faire capitalism against state intervention in economic affairs, and President Woodrow Wilson's segregation of many federal agencies.[5] In less than forty years the federal government had been transformed from an advocate of equality before the law for all Americans into a force supporting the southern political status quo that stood for autocracy and inequality.

If the weakening of Black Christian Nationalism made the churches more open and less insular, it also led to a decline in ecclesiastical interclass fellowship. There was also an emergent tolerance and openness in ecclesiastical matters that reflected the larger social changes taking place in the South. It could be said that the tides of the South's agricultural commodities led social relations full circle. The closing of the international slave trade, the introduction of the cotton gin, and the coronation of cotton led to the consolidation and expansion of slavery at the beginning of the nineteenth century. From the end of slavery until World War I, planters and their political agents devised elaborate coercive measures to keep black southerners in their places, as it were. Then in the 1920s the boll weevil, the collapse of the cotton market during the Depression, the New Deal farm policies that restricted the acreage devoted to growing cotton, and increased competition from synthetic fibers and overseas cotton production undermined the conditions that at the turn of the twentieth century had obliged black southerners to stay put. The price of raw cotton plummeted from a high of thirty-five cents a pound in 1919 to less than six cents in 1931. In the late 1930s, the farm policies of the New Deal reduced the cotton acreage, further reducing the importance of the commodity crop.[6]

Once the growing of cotton ceased to require massive amounts of labor, southern white leaders allowed the floodgates that had stopped the flow of humanity out of the region to open. Nearly five million black southerners were drawn to the North as though it were a Promised Land, in search of jobs, education, and other opportunities that were so often unavailable where they were. The black migration out of the South in the period between 1910 and 1960 was one of the most massive and significant movements in this country's history. In little more than a generation the gradual decline of cotton and the migration of Afro-southerners to northern cities destroyed the economic system on which southern life, including politics, had previously been structured.[7]

The political effects of this mass migration were felt immediately. Northern Democrats began courting black votes. In 1930 the NAACP campaigned with other groups, including organized labor, to successfully block Herbert Hoover's Supreme Court nominee, John J. Parker, because of his "clear supremacist views." Walter White of the NAACP testified before the Senate Judiciary Committee, and local NAACP chapters deluged their senators with telegrams protesting the Parker nomination. Two years later, the NAACP successfully undermined the candidacy of several senatorial candidates who had supported Parker. By 1936 African Americans were firmly established as a force to be reckoned with in national politics. That year the black electorate, which had returned Republican majorities in seventeen straight presidential elections, went overwhelmingly for FDR, becoming a key constituent of the new Democratic coalition.[8]

It was only when African Americans became a voting bloc inside the Democratic Party that they were in a position to oblige northern Democrats to pressure the southern wing of their party. If black Americans had sustained their tradition of supporting "the party of Lincoln," the changes in the national political geography would not have been nearly so dramatic. Truman won the 1948 election on what was, for its time, a radical civil rights platform. That year much of the southern wing broke from the Democratic Party to support Strom Thurmond's States' Rights presidential campaign. The northern Democrats' responsiveness to its new constituency and Thurmond's bolting from the party marked the beginning of a new era of marginalization of southern Democrats from national politics, for the second time in America's history.[9]

The sectional political alignments that had earlier confined black political fortunes to a one-party solid South were quickly becoming obsolete, and civil rights for black Americans was redefined as a national *and* regional "prob-

lem." Appropriately, the reversal of the federal government's discriminatory racial policies saw its earliest expression in the same body that had, in the earlier period, given legal sanction to that policy. Prodded by the NAACP's aggressive legal assault on Jim Crow, in a series of landmark decisions beginning in the early 1930s and culminating in the *Brown* decision in 1954, the Supreme Court invalidated most of its earlier narrow interpretations of the constitutional safeguards embodied in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments. Executive presidential action was no less striking. In 1941 when the black trade unionist A. Philip Randolph threatened to lead 100,000 African Americans in a mass march to Washington, D.C., to protest discrimination in the armed forces and employment discrimination in the war industries, President Roosevelt reversed Washington's custom of accommodating to white supremacy when he issued the celebrated executive order that established the Fair Employment Practices Commission to investigate charges of racial discrimination. In a desperate effort to save the dying Roosevelt coalition, President Truman established the Presidential Committee on Civil Rights, which recommended more federal involvement in promoting racial equality. More orders followed, and even President Eisenhower, who was not known for his advocacy of civil rights, entered the White House with a civil rights agenda.[10]

During this same period Congress was immune from the pressures that prompted these major (albeit largely symbolic) policy shifts in the judicial and executive branches of government. The American system of equal representation meant grassroots changes in the South would have to occur before the legislative results were felt. Black southerners would have to get the franchise, become a constituency, and send to Congress politicians who represented their interests. They would have to become a voting bloc in the South, just as they had become one in the North. A cursory sketch of black Savannahians' social and political actions in the World War II era reveals a subtle but no less significant shift away from the traditional conformity of the Black Christian Nationalism that characterized the era of Booker T. Washington in Savannah and elsewhere. The decline of Black Christian Nationalism accompanied a revision of a worldview; it occurred neither suddenly nor definitely, and traces of the earlier belief in black business ventures as the ticket to the much longed for freedom persisted in the war years and, indeed, into our own time. Black Savannahians did not abandon their business agenda or their community development and self-help ideals. In 1937, less than a decade after the collapse of the city's last "Negro banking institution," black leaders organized the Georgia Savings and Realty Company. Gone were references to salvation, redemption, the rich man Dives and the beggar Lazarus, the

teachings of Jesus, the ethical and moral regenerations of community, and the interconnectedness between strong business and strong nation. The new bank was, according to the *Tribune*, "launched by men of unquestioned financial integrity" who were well prepared to "withstand the rigors of financial bumps." The absence of sacred discourse could be attributed to the new zeitgeist of the period and to the bank's new president, L. B. Toomer, not a member of the clergy, but a prominent realtor.[11]

The setting of the meetings for social change was another indicator of the emerging secularization. When the Savannah branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People was reorganized in 1933, its first meeting was held, not in a church—which had been the case at its earliest inception in 1921—but at the Powell Auditorium, owned by the McKelvey-Powell Company, a "full service" black funeral business. Second Baptist Church hosted the founding meeting of the Chatham County Colored Citizens Council (the "Five C's," a name that echoed the New Deal's alphabet agencies), an umbrella civil rights organization that federated some fifty churches, clubs, fraternities, and business and professional bodies. Subsequent meetings were held at the black Carnegie Library, further signaling the declining role of the churches as the preeminent institutions in black Savannah. While Rev. J. A. Wilson of First African and Rev. C. Norman Perry of Second Baptist were active members of the organization—along with a host of secular leaders—the secular organization's political ventures did not spring from the churches, which explains why the Five C's lacked the evangelical fervor that characterized black civic activism in the earlier period. It was only after projects were decided on that the *Tribune* reported: "Ministers Give Okay."[12]

The decline of Black Christian Nationalism, expressed through the divergence of the sacred and secular and the increased social stratification of the classes, was manifested as well in a new liberalizing of gender relations: Georgia Savings named a woman as vice president of the board of trustees. That woman, Mamie Williams, who always went by her husband's moniker, "Mrs. George S. Williams," was a veteran of local and national political struggles. Williams's résumé included, among other things, stints with Savannah's Republican League of Women Voters, Mary B. Talbert's Anti-Lynching Crusade, and state and national Republican Party politics. Black business, especially the banks and real estate companies, had long been regarded as a strictly male purview. Women, as we have seen time and again, even most dramatically for those few years when they voted in Savannah's municipal elections following the ratification of the Woman's Suffrage Amendment to the United States Constitution (while black men remained disfranchised),

eagerly embraced what they considered their indubitable roles as mothers, nurturers, and bearers of moral fortitude, leaving men to pursue economic and political leadership roles—and thus retrieve their stolen masculinity.[13]

Given the churches' secondary relationship to the new political efforts, it is fitting that women played key roles in the commencement of the new political era. The black Baptist churches had rendered women silent in church governance. Even when women led their struggle for the franchise in the early 1920s, they found their voices not in the confines of their insular churches, but on the streets, in the "public sphere." The same women who had become familiar to many black Savannahians during the voter registration drives a decade earlier appeared as leaders of the new secular organizations. Mamie Williams stood at the helm of the Five C's, and Rebecca Stiles Taylor presided over many of its meetings.[14] In 1930 two women sat on the reorganized executive board of the Savannah branch of the NAACP, and in 1935 Mrs. Z. A. DesVerney was elected president. While there was no evidence that female leaders were placing the principle of equality between the sexes in their political programs, by all appearances gender relations that once established men and women in their separate if interdependent roles were going into the dustbin of history, along with interclass ecclesiastical fellowship.

The NAACP's membership rosters in the mid-1930s reflected the class changes in church fellowship. They replicated the membership listings of the elite mainline Baptist and other Protestant churches. There was a strong showing of doctors and lawyers and a select group of educated middle-class ministers in the local NAACP.[15] The unraveling of Black Christian Nationalism involved assertions of the kind of individualism often associated with bourgeois society. No longer would men and women be relegated to fixed places in the social order, with women acting as mere extensions of their husbands and fathers. No longer would middle-class and elite black Savannahians automatically identify their interests with the poor and working class. The character of the new secular organizations and the struggles they took up were not emphasizing internal developments and the uplift of black Savannah; they were predictive of the postwar modern civil rights movement, assertive and self-confident and not just a little bit directly confrontational.

The political language of the NAACP in the early 1930s also represents a break from the past and suggests the outside influence on the organization. Its national office was based in New York City, and it had grown up, not as part of Booker T's coterie, but in opposition to it. Interracial in its national leadership and northern branches, the Savannah branch introduced a shift from the language of self-help and uplift to a discourse of equality and rights in all areas of human life. With nary a reference to strengthening manliness

or male prerogative, it called for equal rights in voting "for every colored man and woman on the same terms as white men and women," the right to a fair trial, protection from lynching, equal service on railroads, and equal access to public parks, libraries, and schools. It even called for equal opportunity in employment, and to that end in 1932 the NAACP took up the national "Spend Where You Work" campaign. It also protested a screening of *Birth of a Nation* at the Savannah Theatre, held discussions about the Scottsboro case in Alabama, and made a small contribution to the young men's defense.[16]

The Five C's, homegrown and still a product of its time and place, yielded to the theory embedded in the doctrine of separate but equal. It was still the era of *Plessy*, and the Five C's demanded from the mayor, aldermen, and the Chatham County commissioners a recreational facility, a public high school for black Savannahians, and access to direct relief and public works projects that were administered through the New Deal–era Civil Works Administration and Works Projects Administration for Yamacraw, Frogtown, and Old Fort. It also demanded federal relief for the unemployed during the winter months and jobs for the "score of colored mechanics" from "many trades," who had registered with the CWA but remained jobless.[17]

The flurry of political activity during the early years of the New Deal diminished over the course of the decade. In 1939 the national NAACP revoked Savannah's charter after a dramatic decline in membership. It was clear to anyone with political perspective that structural legal revisions were a necessary precursor if black struggles for equality before the law could elicit from the table of the patrician class more than a few scraps of noblesse oblige and benevolence tossed to the floor. Southern politicians would have to become accountable to black southerners. Even the "Spend Where You Earn" campaign, while a significant assertion of economic power, if carried through, could provide at best a limited symbolic victory.[18]

In 1942 Rev. Ralph Mark Gilbert arrived from Detroit to pastor First African Baptist Church, where he remained for fourteen years, until his death. Gilbert understood the importance of federal legal revisions to any movement for democracy in the South. He has since come to be regarded by black (and white) Savannahians as the "father" of the city's civil rights movement and, as one historian put it, "a catalyst for change." Gilbert's reputation has a mythical air about it. As important as he was to Savannah's early movement years, his appearance and longevity at First African Baptist were a manifestation of the decline of Black Christian Nationalism before his arrival. The black churches, while still important in their communities, were no longer *the* dominant institutions. The primacy they had enjoyed since the days of slavery had given way to a civic space that was more diversified.

Had Gilbert arrived at First African two decades earlier, his first efforts at organizing for political change would not have been welcomed by his faith community. It is likely that his tenure would have suffered the same fate as that of his embattled predecessors in the 1920s. But by 1942 the sacred and secular geography in the city had changed, and Gilbert's efforts were welcomed unanimously by black Savannahians, including members of First African.[19]

No sooner had Gilbert arrived than he busied himself with the renewal of the city and the state chapters of the NAACP. In November 1942, seven months after the Savannah branch had been rechartered, the national director of branches for the NAACP, Ella Baker, arrived to help support a local organizing drive. She was impressed when she encountered a thriving movement. The locals under the leadership of Gilbert adapted the community ward system that middle-class mainline black Baptist churches had developed in an earlier era to exercise ecclesiastical control to further their NAACP organizing goals. In November 1943, speaking before the state NAACP convention in Albany, Georgia, Gilbert, who was now state president, said: "Let us be serious in what we do, and let us be careful in our decisions, but not so careful that we shall not be adventurous. Let us not be so careful that we shall temporize with evil, or be timid about battle for what is justly our due." Two years later, at another state meeting in Atlanta, he rallied state NAACP support for Rev. Primus King, who in 1944 sued the Muscogee County registrar for denying him the right to vote in the Democratic primary election in Columbus. King's case was then entering the Federal Circuit Court of Appeals. Gilbert believed that "Attacking the 'white primary' of Georgia" took precedence over all other struggles—including equal education, the right of black Georgians to serve on juries, and equal employment opportunities—because in order to bring about the sweeping democratic changes black southerners envisioned, southern politicians had to be accountable to black southerners.[20]

The 1944 United States Supreme Court decision *Smith v. Allwright* signaled that the federal government was beginning to pry open the vise grip local Democrats held on black southerners. The Court ruled the white primary unconstitutional. The following year Primus King won his case in federal appeals court (*King v. Chapman*). For the second time in America's history the federal government was showing a willingness to intervene in southern politics and suppress the tyranny of the local. This was only the beginning, but it was the most significant judicial event before the Supreme Court's *Brown* decision in 1954. Like *Brown*, the *King* decision supplied a constitutional hook on which the movement could hang its struggles for civil rights.[21]

In 1946, a year after the white primary in Georgia was declared uncon-

stitutional, a voter registration drive in Savannah initiated by Gilbert and the NAACP yielded 22,000 registered black voters, which included a higher proportion of eligible black Savannahians than white Savannahians. To the extent that this enthusiasm was a result of Gilbert's "flair for organization" or his charismatic leadership, as one historian of Savannah's civil rights movement has argued, or a reflection of the effervescence of the black movement for civil rights in Savannah years before its time is difficult to know for sure.[22]

When Gilbert arrived at First African in 1942, he was a widower. His subsequent marriage illustrates an instance of time catching up to place. In 1945 he returned from the annual National Baptist Convention meeting betrothed to young Eloria Sherman from Harlem in New York City. They married that October at First African Baptist. It was one of those heady unions, the stuff of legends—like John Reed and Louise Bryant—that merged romantic love and a passion for social justice and political change. Mrs. Eloria Gilbert was not one to stay home and stoke the fires while her husband went off to war. And her husband was not one who expected his wife to do that. "We could feel the political tides were changing," recalled Mrs. Gilbert years later, "and to keep up with the changes we traveled to every corner of the state to help the people organize local branches of the NAACP." One of the measures of social and political change in the South was her public role and her support of the franchise for men *and* women, so that each could vote equally. It was only a generation ago that black women organizing the vote worked outside the churches with only their tacit support. Then black women suffragists sought the vote for the explicit purpose of refranchising their fathers and husbands and sons. They explicitly wanted the vote in order to restore black manhood, and the men could then in turn stake their rightful claim as protectors of and providers for their women and children, as God intended. Now the pastor and his wife worked side by side as partners organizing for change. "Instead of traveling together," said Mrs. Gilbert, "in order to cover more ground, we traveled individually. Dr. Gilbert might go into the southeast hinterland of the state, while I would go north, toward Augusta." And they "might meet in Atlanta for a couple of days."[23]

By the end of World War II black Savannah was poised to begin the modern civil rights movement. For the first time since Reconstruction black leaders, in their struggles for social justice and equality, would look beyond their communities and beyond the largesse of white men with money and power. During the civil rights era Savannah was a hotbed of direct action protest. Not only was it exceptionally active, it was "self-contained" and sometimes "even at odds with national leadership." Black Savannah, with its legacy of civic activism dating back to the dawn of freedom, led the state of Georgia

during its "Second Reconstruction." Beginning in 1960 black activists held "kneel-ins" in segregated churches, "wade-ins" at segregated Tybee Beach, and "ride-ins" on segregated buses, and after being arrested for accidentally using a "white" restroom, Justin Ford claimed the first unofficial "piss-in."[24]

Although Ralph Mark Gilbert died prematurely in 1958, the city's black ministers eagerly followed in his footsteps, offering their churches as organizing venues and combining political activism with sacred leadership. As black Savannah entered the civil rights era, its black churches no longer enjoyed the authority they once held. But this does not mean that they were now redundant: far from it. With the secularization of black Savannah, the institutional primacy of black churches gave way to more diversified and secular civic space. As the churches concentrated less on restraining their members and providing insular leadership, they would become important elements of social and political struggles. While the mission of black Christians would continue to have both sacred and worldly connotations, the secularization of black civic life and the declining supremacy of black churches gave way to more outwardly focused and militant activism that relied not on the kindness of white strangers but on black claims to freedom as American citizens.

NOTES

Introduction

1. *Savannah Morning News*, January 2, 1923, 6; *Savannah Tribune*, January 4, 1923, 1.

2. *Savannah Tribune*, January 4, 1923, 1.

3. Bureau of the Census, *Sixteenth Census*, vol. 2, tables 1, 6, 8–10. Out of 12,367 dwelling units occupied by black Americans, 90 percent or 11,129 were tenant occupied (74 percent of the white population rented). Eleven percent had private baths with flush toilets, 42 percent had no running water at all in their homes, 35 percent had electricity, 2 percent had modern refrigeration, and 9,524 families continued to cook on wood-burning stoves. By way of comparison, 51 percent of units occupied by white Americans had private baths and flush toilets and 97 percent had electricity.

4. See Hahn, *Nation under Our Feet*.

5. Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll*, 281.

6. Gatewood, *Aristocrats of Color*.

7. See Wimbush, "Bible and African Americans."

8. Nancy Fraser uses this phrase when warning about romanticizing the oppressed and idealizing civil society as a panacea of democracy in "Rethinking the Public Sphere."

9. In 1957 the sociologist E. Franklin Frazier made the first sustained critique of the black middle class in *Black Bourgeoisie*. He argued that this class, through its own interests, frustrated progress for the lower classes. For a more contemporary version of a similar argument see Gaines, *Uplifting the Race*. Some scholars have argued that black women's promotion of middle-class forms of behavior were subversive acts during the period of Jim Crow. Most prominent is Higginbotham, *Righteous Discontent*. See also Gilmore, *Gender and Jim Crow*; Shaw, *What a Woman Ought to Be*; Weisenfeld, *African American Women*; and Edward L. Wheeler, *Uplifting the Race*.

10. See, for example, Roy Rosenzweig's discussion of European immigrants who attempted to rein in passions of more recent immigrants in Worcester, Massachusetts, in *Eight Hours*, esp. chapter 3.

11. For theoretical contributions to this process in other times and places see Iris Marion Young, "Impartiality and the Civic Public," 66–67; Fraser, "Rethinking the Public Sphere," 114–15; Eley, "Nations, Publics, and Political Cultures," 289–339; Marx, *Faith in Nation*, quote on 144.

12. The long-standing debate among Europeanists over the transition from feudal social relations to capitalist relations has produced an agreed-upon interpretative framework that sees the rise of capitalism, whether commercial, agricultural, industrial, or a combination of the three, dependent on the transformation of the

countryside. This consensus has been instructive for historians of the American South. While Atlantic slavery existed in the modern world, and while it provided raw materials for the economic development of the northern states and Great Britain, the social organization of the slave South was arguably pre-modern. Emancipation, which led to a large pool of free black wage laborers and planters without access to forced labor, was a profound societal transformation. Hobsbawm, "General Crisis of the European Economy"; Aston and Philpin, *Brenner Debate*; Hahn, " 'Unmaking of the Southern Yeomanry," and Hahn and Prude, *Countryside in the Age of Capitalist Transformation*, introduction; Foner, *Nothing But Freedom*; Genovese, *From Rebellion to Revolution.*

13. In an otherwise interesting chapter on King and some of the ideas that animated his social ethics, David L. Chappell writes that "what sets [King] off from the black church is what makes him significant" in *Stone of Hope*, 48. As important as King was to the freedom movement in the South, he was not the only southern black Baptist minister to participate in the civil rights movement; there were others, too, and in 1961 they broke with the more quiescent National Baptist Convention, Inc., to form the Progressive National Baptist Convention. See James M. Washington, *Testament of Hope*, xvii.

14. For a discussion of the sociological meaning of secularization see Lilla, "Godless Europe," a review of *Earthly Powers*; the sociologist Alden Morris in *Origins of the Civil Rights Movement* was one of the first scholars to discuss the churches as places where activists in the movement organized.

One. Mapping Black Savannah

1. *The Crisis*, April 1922, 253–54; *Savannah Tribune*, June 26, 1924, 1, and October 14, 1926, 1; Booker T. Washington, *Negro in Business*, 170–71.

2. This description of Savannah's black business district comes from the *City Directory*, 1920–23.

3. *Savannah Tribune*, August 14, 1920, 4; *The Crisis*, April 1920, 338, September 1921, 227; *City Directory*, 1920.

4. W. E. B. Du Bois, "Religion of the American Negro," 214–25; Frazier, *Negro Church in America,* 98; Berlin et al., *Slaves No More*, 175–76; "Colloquy with Colored Ministers"; Foner, *Freedom's Lawmakers*; Foner, *Reconstruction*, 70–71, Drago, *Black Politicians*, 72–73; Perdue, *Negro in Savannah*, 39–40, 96–99; Jacqueline Jones, *Soldiers of Light and Love*, 73–74, Montgomery, *Under Their Own Vine*, chapter 3; Hahn, *Nation under Our Feet*, 177–89.

5. Weare, *Black Business*, chapter 1; Booker T. Washington, *Negro in Business*, 170–71; *City Directory*, 1920, 20–21; *The Crisis*, November 1921, 82, April 1922, 254; *Savannah Tribune*, August 7, 1920, 1. According to the Bureau of the Census, the average assets of all banks in the United States in 1920 was $1.72 million, and the average assets of banks that were not members of the Federal Reserve were $665,000. See United States Bureau of the Census, *Historical Statistics*, Series X580–81, 1019, and Series X614–15, 1023; Booker T. Washington, *Negro in Business*, 170–71; *Savannah Tribune*, July 17, 1920, 1, and October 9, 1920, 1.

6. *Savannah Tribune*, July 17, 1920, 1, and October 9, 1920, 1.

7. *Savannah Tribune*, February 14, 1920, 1; Bureau of the Census, Manuscript Census, RG 29, reel 240, Chatham County, GA, T625, Fourteenth Census (hereafter cited as Manuscript Census), 1920.

8. *Savannah Tribune*, January 3, 1920, February 14, 1920, September 14, 1922, 4, September 18, 1920, February 8, 1923, 3, May 29, 1924, December 15, 1927, January 3, 1920, 1, and October 20, 1921, 1.

9. *Savannah Tribune*, September 18, 1920, December 15, 1927, May 29, 1924, 8, and July 5, 1924, 1.

10. Cohen, *Making a New Deal*, 75–83.

11. For slavery in the urban South see Wade, *Slavery in the Cities*, and a more recent study that upholds Wade's thesis by Takagi, *"Rearing Wolves."*

12. Perdue, *Negro in Savannah*, 11–12; Gatewood, *Aristocrats of Color*, 91, 158; Foner, *Freedom's Lawmakers*, 173. For examples of racial discord in the late nineteenth century see Perdue, chapter 1. For a detailed discussion about segregation in the urban South see Rabinowitz, *Race Relations*; Woodward, *Strange Career of Jim Crow* and "*Strange Career* Critics"; Dittmer, *Black Georgia*, 17–18; McDonogh, *Black and Catholic in Savannah*, 45. Chapter 3 of *Sacred Mission* explores in detail state and city politics and the rise of Jim Crow segregation.

13. Blassingame, "Before the Ghetto," 482; map prepared in 1960 by Savannah's Metropolitan Planning Commission (hereafter MPC); Work Projects Administration (hereafter WPA, *Drums and Shadows,* quote on 23.

14. Blassingame, "Before the Ghetto," 482; Chatham County, MPC, map, 1990; WPA, *Drums and Shadows*, 1–11; Manuscript Census, 1920.

15. WPA, *Drums and Shadows*, 32; interview with George Faisan, pastor of Tremont Temple Baptist Church. These areas have since been razed to accommodate Interstate 16. *Savannah Tribune*, July 9, 1925, 4, and July 29, 1926, 4. A decade later, 1,025 live births were reported for white Americans and 727 for black Americans. White stillbirths were 35, compared to 118 black stillbirths. *Savannah Tribune*, July 25, 1935, 1.

16. Manuscript Census, 1920; Enumeration Districts 46 and 47 show a total population of 4,147, of whom 628 were white. E.D. 46 shows a population of 1,867, of whom 153 were white. Ninety-nine were first-generation immigrants or children of immigrants. It is likely that the Syrians who were listed in the manuscript census were Lebanese Christians whom the Turks referred to as Syrians (from "Greater Syria"), and that the people who were identified as Turks were ethnic Greeks. Daniels, *Coming to America*, 188–207.

17. See Arnesen, "Whiteness and the Historians' Imagination," and responses to Arnesen in "Whiteness Roundtable."

18. Manuscript Census, 1920, Enumeration Districts 46 and 47. Of the white population that owned property, three were immigrant families and one was a native white family.

19. Dittmer, *Black Georgia*, 10.; *City Directory*, 1920; Manuscript Census, 1920, Enumeration Districts 46 and 47; WPA, *Drums and Shadows*, 23. On black transience

in Yamacraw in the 1920s and 1930s see the interview with Harry James, deacon of First African Baptist (FAB). In the late 1930s, as a result of a Federal Housing Administration program, Old Yamacraw was destroyed, and the old buildings were replaced with modern concrete buildings with subsidized rents.

20. Manuscript Census, 1920, Enumeration District 58.

21. Manuscript Census, 1920, Enumeration Districts 46–47, 58.

22. Mary Ayers's activities are detailed in chapters 3 and 4; Manuscript Census, 1920, Enumeration District 78; *City Directory*, 1920.

23. For a discussion of European immigrant groups in Chicago during the same period see Cohen, *Making a New Deal*, chapter 2; W. E. B. Du Bois, *Philadelphia Negro*, 311. Frazier also argued that "mixed ancestry" was crucial in the formation of the black upper class. Frazier, *Black Bourgeoisie,* 20; Higginbotham, *Righteous Discontent*, 187; Manuscript Census, 1920.

24. Gatewood writes that the color consciousness of the mulatto elite of the old free black community of Savannah resembled a similar group in Charleston, SC. Resembled perhaps, but it was quite small. In 1860, Savannah's free black population comprised only 8.3 percent of the total black population, small compared to the seaport cities of Charleston and New Orleans. Forty-four percent of the black population in New Orleans was free, and 19 percent was free in Charleston. The significance of this is that the smaller free black population in Savannah wielded less economic power than the free black populations in Charleston and New Orleans. This in turn affected social stratification along racial lines. According to Ira Berlin, the economic power of free black populations during the antebellum era derived from their ability to monopolize some aspect of the local economy that would have made white people dependent on them. Typically they were free black artisans. In those circumstances white southerners supported the buffer caste system by patronizing free black tradesmen, lending them money and selling them land. If black artisans were the most prosperous of all free black southerners during slavery, they did not make out so well in Savannah. As Venus Green shows, free black artisans in Savannah lived impoverished lives. They did not monopolize some aspect of the local economy. Added to this was the question of the relationship between caste and status after slavery. Without historical antecedent, caste and color did not resonate in Savannah in the ways that they continued to do in Charleston and New Orleans in the twentieth century. Gatewood, *Aristocrats of Color*, 158; Drago, *Black Politicians*, xi; Whittington B. Johnson, *Black Savannah*, 4–5, 108, 111–13; Berlin, *Slaves without Masters*, 214; Venus Green, "Preliminary Investigation"; Manuscript Census, Enumeration District 57; for a discussion of skin color and status and political activism see chapter 4.

25. Interview with Naomi Hill and Thelma Miles, members of Connors Temple Baptist Church, Savannah, GA; *Savannah Tribune*, June 25, 1925, 1, July 2, 1925, 1, and April 20, 1922, 1.

26. *Savannah Tribune*, February 19, 1921, 1, March 26, 1925, 1, and January 21, 1926, 1.

27. *Savannah Tribune*, April 17, 1924, 4; see chapter 3 for a discussion of black women voting in Savannah in the early 1920s.

28. Typically, the mother church assigned an ordained deacon to lead services and minister to the congregants' needs, and once a month the pastor traveled to the prayer house to serve communion. Originally First African operated thirteen prayer houses, but by the 1920s only three—Sabine Field Prayer House, East Savannah, and the Thunderbolt Prayer House—survived. Second Baptist, a younger and more modest operation, operated one prayer house, in East Savannah. *City Directory*, 1920; First African Baptist Church, minutes, board of deacons meetings, July 15, 1918, and July 10, 1922; Second Baptist Church, minutes, board of deacons meetings, July 24, 1922; Gadsden, "Brief History of the First Congregational Church"; interview with John Q. Adams, June 16, 1994; *City Directory*, 1920; Whittington B. Johnson, *Black Savannah*, 16–17, 21– 22. Church scholars make a distinction between fundamentalism and primitive churches. Primitivists seek mainly to conform their lives and religious organizations to the First Age of Christendom. Fundamentalism was a loose, diverse, and always changing alliance of confrontation Christians united by their opposition to modernist attempts to bring Christianity into line with modern thought. For black southern Baptists' relationship to fundamentalism see chapter 2; for primitivists see Hughes, *Primitive Church*.

29. For an excellent discussion of Baptist theology in the second half of the eighteenth century, which rejected the formalism of the Church of England, and not the social relations of slavery, see Isaac, *Transformation of Virginia*, chapter 8; Thomas, *First African Baptist Church*, 11–21; Simms, *First Colored Baptist Church*, 88–89; Sobel, *Trabelin' On,* 104–7; Thomas, *First African Baptist Church*, 2; Simms, *First Colored Baptist Church*, v; *Savannah Tribune*, January 29, 1925, 1, May 13, 1926, 1, January 24, 1929, 6, February 7, 1929, 6, and January 16, 1930, 6; May, "From These Roots," 4–5. After the Civil War the church changed its name to the Second Baptist Church. In the 1960s it renamed itself the Second African Baptist Church. In this study I refer to the church as Second Baptist.

30. Solomon Davis Ross, pastor of Second Baptist in the early 1920s, was a graduate of Morehouse College, and he spent two years (1909–11) at the University of Chicago. Lawrence M. Glenn, who pastored First Bryan in the 1920s, received a theological degree from Morehouse. Thomas Jefferson Goodall, First African, graduated from Roger Williams University in his hometown of Nashville. Edgar Garfield Thomas, First African, graduated from Morehouse College. Mack T. Williams, First African (1929–30), graduated from Oberlin College and attended McCormick Seminary and Northwestern University. J. Alfred Wilson, First African (1931–38) graduated from Morehouse and studied theology at the University of Chicago. *Savannah Tribune*, March 22, 1923, 1; April 24, 1924, 1; November 2, 1922, 3; October 25, 1923, 1; October 10, 1929, 1; and January 1, 1931, 1.

31. *Savannah Tribune*, May 15, 1924, 4; First African Baptist Church, minutes, board of deacons meetings, May 13, 1918; *Savannah Tribune*, May 26, 1927, 1, and January 20, 1938, 1.

32. *Savannah Tribune*, June 24, 1926, 1; "John Hope to Deliver Cornerstone Address," March 22, 1923, 1; April 24, 1924, 1; (Vacation Bible School) July 20, 1925, 3; see chapter 3 for the public school struggle.

33. First African, minutes, board of deacons meetings, 1918–33; Second Baptist, minutes, board of deacons meetings, 1922–32; *City Directory*, 1920 and 1921; Berean Baptist Association, minutes, July 20–25, 1922. Interviews with Frank Chisholm, deacon of First African Baptist, and John Q. Adams, a "son" of First African and pastor of Mount Zion Baptist in the 1920s, May 18, 1994.

34. For a discussion of racial uplift among ministerial elites in the nineteenth century, which includes an examination of the dialectic of accommodation and resistance, see Edward L. Wheeler, *Uplifting the Race,* chapter 1. Wheeler makes the important point that the notion of "uplift," a common term used in England and the United States, meant moral and spiritual elevation, the improvement of physical conditions, and intellectual enlightenment. Interview with John Q. Adams, May 18, 1994; also interview with Naomi Hills and Thelma Miles.

35. Saint John Baptist Church, "History and Forty-Second Anniversary and Reunion Year Book of the Saint John Baptist Church," 20–21; Berean Baptist Association, minutes, July 20–25, 1922.

36. Saint John Baptist Church, "History of St. John's Baptist Church," 18; church roles and *City Directory*, 1920–28.

37. Interview with John Q. Adams, June 16, 1994.

38. See chapter 2.

39. May, "From These Roots"; Second Baptist Church, One Hundred and Sixtieth Anniversary program, 1962 (not paginated); for examples of N. M. Clarke's articles see *Savannah Tribune*, July 10, 1923, 1, October 20, 1927, 4, and May 23, 1929, 1; *The Georgia Baptist*, May 25, 1929, 1; for N. M. Clarke's associations with leaders of First African and First Bryan Baptist see *Savannah Tribune*, April 26, 1923, 1, and May 4, 1935, 1.

40. See Berean Baptist Association, minutes, 23rd annual session, July 20–25, 1922; and the *Savannah Tribune*, February 9, 1939.

41. *Savannah Tribune*, August 27, 1936, 2, April 5, 1934, 1, and April 27, 1922, 5; interviews with Washington Hart and with Naomi Hills and Thelma Miles, Connors Temple Baptist Church, Savannah, GA. Quote in *The Georgia Baptist*, October 28, 1928.

42. *Savannah Tribune*, December 1, 1927, 3; Smalls, *Year Book of Colored Savannah*, 33.

43. Booker T. Washington, *Negro in Business*, 17.

44. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities,* 12; Bhabha, *Nation and Narration*, 298, 5.

45. *Savannah Tribune*, April 22, 1926, 1.

46. NNBL Report of the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Annual Sessions, 1917–18, 138–39, hereafter referred to as NNBL Report).

47. See Andrews, "Poetics of Afro-American Autobiography," 84–86; Booker T. Washington, *Up from Slavery*; NNBL Report, 1917–1918, 138–39.

48. *Savannah Tribune*, April 22, 1926, 1.
49. Leach, *Land of Desire*, chapter 7, quote on 201.
50. Leach, *Land of Desire*, chapter 7.
51. *Savannah Tribune*, March 22, 1928, 4 (my emphasis).
52. *Savannah Tribune*, February 21, 1920, 4.
53. NNBL Report, 1915, 219–21.
54. *Savannah Tribune*, June 5, 1920, 6 (emphasis in original).
55. *Savannah Tribune*, February 5, 1925, 1, and May 7, 1925, 1.
56. NNBL Report, 1921, 9; 1924, 159–62.
57. NNBL Report, 1921, 8–9, 158–65.
58. NNBL Report, 1915, 164–66.
59. NNBL Report, 1915, 170.
60. "Wanted—A Real Business League," *The Crisis*, February 1922, 160–63.

Two. Holding the Line for the Word

1. *Savannah Tribune*, January 12, 1922, 3.
2. For a full discussion of the stratification of black churches and the distinctions between "mainline" and "marginal" churches in early twentieth-century Savannah see chapter 1.
3. Chudacoff and Smith, *Evolution of American Urban Society,* chapter 8; Ayers, *Promise of the New South,* 200–201, quote on 203.
4. Hubert's article reprinted in *Savannah Tribune*, February 2, 1928, 4; see also March 1, 1928, 4, March 22, 1928, 4, and December 13, 1928, 1. In 1910 there were 175,000 full landowners, 43,000 partial landowners, and 670,000 sharecroppers in the entire South. Most black landowners resided in the Upper South, along coastal regions and in the Trans-Mississippi states, where concentration on commodity agriculture was lowest and where the railroads were far and stores were few. Ayers, *Promise of the New South*, 208. For an excellent firsthand account of a black farmer who owned his own land in early twentieth-century Alabama that shows the fickleness of landownership in its relationship to the vagaries of a grievous credit system see Rosengarten, *All God's Danger.*
5. Wagner, *Profiles of Black Georgia Baptists*, 88; *The Georgia Baptist,* August 10, 1929, 9–10.
6. See Gessel, "Nowhere but Heaven," chapter 2; interview with Frank Chisholm; *The Georgia Baptist*, August 10, 1929, 9–10.
7. *Savannah Tribune*, April 13, 1922, 1, 5.
8. *Savannah Tribune*, March 1, 1923, 3, and April 16, 1925, 3.
9. *Savannah Tribune*, July 24, 1924, 4 (question mark in original), and March 22, 1928, 4.
10. The 1920 *City Directory* lists 53 black Baptist churches; *Savannah Tribune*, July 24, 1924, 4; *The Georgia Baptist*, May 25, 1929, 1, 3.
11. *Savannah Tribune*, August 28, 1924, 4.
12. Hodges, "Charles Manuel 'Sweet Daddy' Grace," 170–79; Fauset, *Black Gods of the Metropolis*, 22–30; McDonogh, *Black and Catholic in Savannah,* 51–52, 85; Sernett,

Bound for the Promised Land, 197; *Savannah Tribune*, April 1, 1926, 3; Fauset, *Black Gods of the Metropolis*, 23; Hodges, "Charles Manuel 'Sweet Daddy' Grace," 171, 173; Whiting, " 'From Saint to Shuttler,' " 133–40.

13. *Savannah Tribune*, April 1, 1926, 3.

14. Hodges, "Charles Manuel 'Sweet Daddy' Grace," 173; Fauset, *Black Gods of the Metropolis*, 26.

15. *Savannah Tribune*, April 29, 1926, 1; interview with Edith Stripling.

16. *Savannah Tribune*, May 20, 1926, 6.

17. Thompson, *Making of the English Working Class*, 350–400; Higgenbotham shows that black Baptist women who rejected rural folk religion did so partly as a form of resistance to white people's beliefs that black Americans were inferior. By claiming "respectable" behavior both in and out of church, black women "boldly asserted the will and agency to define themselves outside the parameters of prevailing racist discourses." Higginbotham argues that this embrace of middle-class notions of respectability was a political act, and it was meant to be the first step in communication with white America. Higgenbotham, *Righteous Discontent*, 35–37, 192, 196, quotes on 35; see also Edward L. Wheeler, *Uplifting the Race*.

18. Young, "Impartiality and the Civic Public." For an argument positing religious leaders as the harbingers of universalism and modernity in South Africa see Comaroff and Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution*.

19. *Savannah Tribune*, April 29, 1926, 1; Hodges, "Charles Manuel 'Sweet Daddy' Grace," 172.

20. *Savannah Tribune*, September 6, 1928, 1; WPA, *Drums and Shadows,* 46.

21. *Savannah Tribune*, September 6, 1928, 1.

22. Brackney, *Baptists*, 58; "History and Forty-second Anniversary and Reunion Year Book of the Saint John Baptist Church, 1891–1933," 21; interviews with Frank Chisholm and Edith Stripling. So great was Stripling's younger sister's fear of snakes that in order to avoid a river baptism she joined the First Congregational Church; *Savannah Tribune*, April 18, 1930, 6, July 25, 1935, 1, and April 7, 1938, 3.

23. Bureau of the Census, *Fourteenth Census of the United States*, Table 9. Black literacy rates in Savannah in 1920 were 80 percent; Lincoln and Mamiya, *Black Church*, 93, 98. As late as 1947, 46.2 percent of rural ministers surveyed had an eighth-grade education or less; in 1950, 58.2 percent had never gone beyond high school. Sermons in the possession of Saint John Baptist Church, Savannah, GA. Both pastors earned degrees in theology from Morehouse College. *Savannah Tribune*, August 15, 1935, 4.

24. Hodges, "Charles Manuel 'Sweet Daddy' Grace," 174; Mays, *Born to Rebel*, 13–14; Mays and Nicholson, *Negro's Church,* Sernett, *Bound for the Promised Land*, 229–30.

25. William James, *Varieties of Religious Experience*, lecture 9, "Conversion."

26. Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll,* 233–34, 238, 240, 723; Levine, *Black Culture and Black Consciousness,* 21, 37–38; Raboteau, *Slave Religion*, 227; Mays, *Born to Rebel*, 14; Harris, *Rise of Gospel Blues*, 3.

27. Watson, "Negro Primitive Religious Services," 5.

28. WPA, *Drums and Shadows*, 48–49.

29. E. G. Thomas, letter to the editor, *Savannah Tribune*, May 7, 1925, 4; *Savannah Tribune*, June 18, 1925, 3, and June 11, 1925, 3.

30. *Savannah Tribune*, June 18, 1925, 3, June 11, 1925, 3, and January 12, 1922, 4.

31. Saint John Baptist Church, "Members' Handbook, 12; Harris, *Rise of the Gospel Blues*, 68–69; *Savannah Tribune*, February 10, 1927, 4.

32. Southern, *Music of Black,* 357–94. The sociologist Pierre Bourdieu argued that "taste" becomes an "affirmation of the superiority of those who were satisfied with the sublimated, refined, disinterested, gratuitous, distinguished pleasures forever closed to the profane," the opposite of Thomas's "Delicatessen Wife." See Bourdieu, *Distinction*, 3–7, quote on 7.

33. Harris, *Rise of the Gospel Blues*, chapter 5; *Savannah Tribune*, April 8, 1926, 4.

34. For Whitefield's revivalism in the American South see Isaac, *Transformation of Virgina*, chapter 8; and McLoughlin, *Revivals, Awakenings, and Reform*, 60–66, 75.

35. *Savannah Tribune*, July 10, 1923, 1; Berean Baptist Association, minutes, twenty-eighth annual session, Thunderbolt, GA, July 21–24, 1927, 7–9, located in the Levi and Jewell Terrell Collection, Atlanta University Center, Woodruff Library.

36. *The Georgia Baptist*, May 23, 1918, and February 21, 1918.

37. *The Georgia Baptist*, April 18, 1918, 2; for discussions of the social gospel movement that had become a dominant theological strain in the northeast during the period see Ahlstrom, *Religious History*, 390–91, 401, 775–79, Handy, *Social Gospel in America*, 253–54, and Rauschenbusch, *Christianity and Social Crisis.*

38. *The Georgia Baptist*, May 23, 1918; *Savannah Tribune*, August 31, 1922, 3, and September 14, 1922, 4; report from Mrs. S. Jewell Fluker, president of the Woman's Convention of the Georgia Missionary Baptist Convention, November 14–17, 1922, Columbus, GA, 74–80; *Savannah Tribune*, January 21, 1926, 1, and January 28, 1926, 4.

39. Marsden, *Understanding Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism*, 58–59, 94.

40. Curtis Lee Laws coined the term "fundamentalist" in 1920 and identified as fundamentalists those willing to "do battle royal for the Fundamentals" of the faith, which included the inerrancy of Scripture, the virgin birth of Christ, his substitutionary atonement, the bodily resurrection, and the authenticity of miracles. See Hankins, "Strange Career of J. Frank Norris," 373–91, quote on 377; Ahlstrom, *Religious History*, 909–10; *Savannah Tribune*, July 16, 1925, 1; for an argument that most black American Christians in the South were Creationists see Moran, "Scopes Trial and Southern Fundamentalism," 95–120; *Savannah Tribune*, July 23, 1925, 3.

41. *Savannah Tribune*, January 21, 1926, 3, and March 8, 1923, 5.

42. *Savannah Tribune*, May 30, 1930, 6, and March 6, 1930, 6. According to Rev. John Q. Adams, Williams was dismissed for wielding a gun from the pulpit in a jealous rage involving his fiancée and another man. All references to Williams's dismissal have been deleted from official church records. Interview with John Q. Adams, May 18, 1994.

43. For white southern Baptists' views on evangelists Dwight Moody and Ira Sankey see Harvey, *Redeeming the South*, 96; Rev. J. H. Ralston, D.D., "Sound Doctrine," *The Georgia Baptist*, May 23, 1918, 1; *The Georgia Baptist*, April 18, 1918, 1; Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture,* 32, 130–48; for a discussion of black Christian civilizationism see chapter 4.

44. Foner, *Story of American Freedom*, 170; *The Georgia Baptist*, May 30, 1918, 2.

45. On Baptist polity see, for example, First African Baptist Church, Constitution and Rules of Order, 1921; Massey and McKinney, *Church Administration*, 146–47; Branch, *Parting the Waters*, 28; for a discussion of Rockefeller's philanthropic involvement in southern education see chapter 4; James R. Green, *World of the Worker*, 89; Ahlstrom, *Religious History*, 911.

46. *The Georgia Baptist*, April 18, 1918, 2. Rockefeller wrote this pamphlet some years before he would establish his "Universal church"—Riverside Church—in Harlem, New York City, in 1931. Ahlstrom, *Religious History*, 911; *The Georgia Baptist*, February 21, 1918, 2.

47. Massey and McKinney, *Church Administration*, 70–73; Brackney, *Baptists,* xviii; *The Georgia Baptist*, February 21, 1918, 2.

48. Harvey, *Redeeming the South*, 145–46; Lincoln and Mamiya, *Black Church*, 27–28. See chapter 4 for competing state Baptist associations formed by black Baptists in Georgia in the late nineteenth century and James M. Washington, *Frustrated Fellowship,* esp. chapter 6; *Savannah Tribune*, November 4, 1926, July 25, 1929, February 20, 1930, November 11, 1926, June 14, 1923, 1, July 5, 1923, 1, March 20, 1924, and April 1, 1926, 3.

49. *Savannah Tribune*, January 28, 1923, 4, February 1, 1923, 4, and March 1, 1923, 6. The IMU sponsored the mass meeting that took place after the failure of the Wage Earners Savings Bank. Aside from that, it remained dormant. *Savannah Tribune*, March 15, 1928, 1.

Three. "Even If He Is a Woman"

1. *Savannah Tribune*, July 12, 1923, 1. Other signatories were CME bishop R. S. Williams; AME bishop W. A. Fountain; John H. Lewis, president, Morris Brown University; R. S. Ingram, principal, Indiana High School, Macon; J. W. E. Bowen, vice president, Gammon Theological Seminary; H. R. Butler, Grand Master Most Worshipful, Union Grand Lodge A. F. & A. M. Georgia; Herman E. Perry, president, Standard Life Insurance Company; Capt. R. T. Walden, attorney; Rev. A. B. McCoy, secretary, Sunday School Department, Presbyterian Church; W. F. Brodie, cashier, Citizen's Trust Company; A. M. Wilkins, vice president, Citizens Trust Company; B. J. Davis, editor, pro–Booker T. Washington *Atlanta Independent*.

Du Bois quote from *Souls of Black Folk*, 152; for a discussion of various ideological views held by Georgia's African Americans on the State Missionary Baptist Convention and its demands see Davis, *Clashing of the Soul*, 153–55.

2. *Savannah Tribune*, July 12, 1923, 1.

3. Letters from William Jefferson White to Du Bois and Equal Rights

Convention, Papers of W. E. B. Du Bois on microfilm, reel 1, frames 1010–29. See also Donaldson, "New Negroes in a New South," 73–74; Lewis, *W. E. B. Du Bois*, 326–27; Donaldson, "Standing on a Volcano," 167; Litwack, *Trouble in Mind*, 315–19.

4. *Savannah Tribune*, July 12, 1923 (my emphasis).

5. J. Morgan Kousser's interpretation of black disfranchisement and the creation of the Solid South is the most comprehensive and best study on the subject. See *Shaping of Southern Politics*.

6. Henry James, *American Scene*, 276–77; Jacqueline Jones, *Soldiers of Light and Love,* 73–74; Foner, *Reconstruction,* 96–99; James D. Anderson, *Education of Blacks,* 6–7, 11. Along the southeastern seaboard, the average school term was less than one hundred days, half of what it was in New England. Only three-fifths of school-age children were enrolled, and even fewer regularly attended school. Equally striking was the contrast in school financing. The average expenditure per student per school term in 1900 ranged from $4.34 in North Carolina to $37.76 in Massachusetts, and the national average was $20.29. Literacy rates corresponded predictably to these statistics. More than a million and half individuals ten years and older—more than a quarter of whom were white—could not read and write. With less than one-tenth of the nation's population, the four southern seaboard states were burdened with one-fourth of the nation's illiterates. Harlan, *Separate and Unequal,* 9–11, 214.

7. See Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction*, 651; Du Bois, *Negro Common School*, 38; Kousser, "Separate but Not Equal," 17–44; Margo, *Race and Schooling,* 70.

8. On the defeat of the Populists, see Goodwyn, *Democratic Promise*; Fredrickson, *Black Image*. For an elegant argument about how Booker T. Washington made it possible for white leaders of the New South and other parts of the country to reconcile racial segregation and disfranchisement with their abiding faith in America as a democracy see West, *Education of Booker T. Washington*.

9. Kousser, *Shaping of Southern Politics*, 63–65; Grant, *Way It Was*, 172–79; Woodward, "Tom Watson and the Negro," 14–33, quote on 24; Woodward, *Origins of the New South*, 264–72.

10. Kousser, *Shaping of Southern Politics,* 73–76, 182, 209–11, 215–16.

11. Woodward, *Origins of the New South*, 328 (emphasis in original).

12. Grantham, *Hoke Smith*, 146–47; Kousser, *Shaping of Southern Politics*, 218–20; Woodward, *Tom Watson*, 372–74; *Savannah Morning News*, January 7, 1906.

13. Kousser, *Shaping of Southern Politics*, 219, cf. 54; *Savannah Morning News*, January 28, 1906, and October 30, 1905. *Smith v. Allwright* struck down the white primary in 1944. Lawson, *Running for Freedom,* 13.

14. Harlan, *Separate and Unequal*, quote on 15, 228–29; *Savannah Morning News*, February 11, 1906.

15. Margo, *Race and Schooling*, 36–37; Harlan, *Separate and Unequal*, chapter 7; James D. Anderson, *Education of Blacks*, 194–95; Harlan, *Separate and Unequal*, 228–29.

16. *Savannah Morning News*, January 27, 1906; Estill's concerns were warranted. U.S. representative Keifer of Ohio introduced a bill in 1906 that would have

reduced the number of representatives in the House according to the numbers of African Americans who were disfranchised. If Georgia adopted a disfranchisement amendment, according to this bill, it would lose six of its eleven members. Presumably all would have come from the low country. *Savannah Tribune*, March 3, 1906.

17. Grantham, *Hoke Smith*, 154. By 1924 Atlanta had eight junior and senior high schools for white students, and that year it opened Booker T. Washington High School, the first high school for black students. Like black public schools in Savannah, Booker T. was overcrowded and not as well equipped as any of the white schools. Baylor, *Race and the Shaping*, 205–6; Dittmer, *Black Georgia*, 143; Margo, *Race and Schooling*, 36–37; Harlan, *Separate and Unequal*, chapter 7.

18. James D. Anderson, *Education of Blacks*, 94–195; *Savannah Tribune*, May 5, 1927, and September 7, 1939; *City Directory*, 1920; Du Bois and Dill, *Common School*, 57; Thomas Jesse Jones, *Negro Education*, 2:197.

19. See Litwack, *Trouble in Mind*, for a comprehensive treatment of Jim Crow; *Savannah Tribune*, October 12, 1922; *Savannah Morning News*, May 20, 1921; *Savannah Tribune*, October 12, 1922, 4, and November 10, 1922, 1.

20. Fox-Genovese, *Within the Plantation Household*, 38–39, 46; McCurry, *Masters of Small Worlds,* 21–22; Cott, *Grounding of Modern Feminism*, 13–17; Genovese, *Political Economy of Slavery*, 13–39; Friedman, *Enclosed Garden*, 19.

21. Kraditor, *Ideas of the Woman Suffrage Movement*, 139; Marjorie Spruill Wheeler, *New Women*; Scott, *Southern Lady*; Lebsock, "Women Suffrage"; Elna C. Green, *Southern Strategies*, chapter 1.

22. Terborg-Penn, "African American Women," 135–55.

23. Cott, *Grounding of Modern Feminism*, 53–55; Stansell, *American Moderns*, 227, 230; Ford, "Alice Paul," 277–94.

24. Elna C. Green, *Southern Strategies*, quote on 13, 13–14, 40–42.

25. Elna C. Green, *Southern Strategies*, 46–52; Lebsock, "Woman Suffrage," 62–100.

26. *The Crisis*, October 1912, 243, 234; Cott, *Grounding of Modern Feminism*, 68–69; Terborg-Penn, "Discontented Black Feminists," 487–503.

27. Wheeler suggests that the sympathy of the northern suffragists for the views of southerners on the race issue resulted from their own fears and resentments of the enfranchisement of immigrants. Marjorie Spruill Wheeler, *New Women*, 115; on Du Bois's position before ratification see Yellin, "Du Bois' *Crisis* and Woman's Suffrage, 365–75; *The Crisis*, October 1920, 261.

28. Letter from Benjamin Tillman to the editor of the *Maryland Suffrage News* (n.d.), reprinted in *The Crisis*, January 1915; *Savannah Tribune*, September 20, 1920, 4, and October 9, 1920.

29. Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, 6–9; W. E. B. Du Bois, *Souls of Black Folk*, 129, 135.

30. Gatewood, *Aristocrats of Color*, 80; R. S. Taylor, "Sketch of the History," 53–54.

31. Rebecca Stiles Taylor, "Sketch of the History," 54–55; General Missionary Baptist Convention of Georgia (hereafter referred to as GMBC), minutes, November 14–17, 1922, Columbus, Georgia, 72–73.

32. *Savannah Tribune*, January 3, 1920, 6; Manuscript Census, 1920; GMBC, minutes, Atlanta, Macon, GA, November 15–18, 1921; *Savannah Tribune*, April 23, 1921, 3, January 3, 1920, 6, February 14, 1920, 6, and November 4, 1923, 1.

33. Williams's civic activism in Savannah dated back to the 1880s. Perdue, *Negro in Savannah*, 97–98; *The Crisis*, February 1923, 213–15. In 1924 Williams was appointed an associate member of the Republican National Committee. According to the *Savannah Tribune*, she was the first African American in the state of Georgia to have such an appointment. The same year she became an honorary president of the National League of Republican Colored Voters, which she co-founded along with Mary Booze of Mississippi. The following year she attended President Coolidge's inauguration and led a delegation of black southern women to call on President and Mrs. Coolidge. *Savannah Tribune*, April 17, 1924, 4, and April 25, 1925, 3; Higginbotham, "In Politics to Stay," 199–220; Manuscript Census, 1920, *Savannah Tribune*, June 18, 1921, 3, and May 21, 1921, 1.

34. Those who appeared in the 10 percent sample from this neighborhood included Aline Jameson, whose husband, John H., was one of the city's two black dentists; Carrie Lemon, whose husband, James G., was a prominent lawyer and civic leader; Susie Perry, whose husband, Paul, was vice president of Mechanics Bank; Victoria Roberts, whose husband, Nathan, was a deacon at First Bryan Baptist Church and president of the Savannah Undertaking Establishment; and Catherine Dingle, whose husband, J.G., was an attorney also registered. Mary Ayers and her husband also lived in this neighborhood. *Savannah Tribune*, May 21, 1921, 1; Manuscript Census, 1920.

35. *Savannah Tribune*, May 21, 1921; Manuscript Census, 1920; GMBC, minutes, 1920, 62; *Savannah Tribune*, January 8, 1921, 4.

36. *Savannah Tribune*, April 24, 1920, 4. In Richmond during the same period, black men resisted the political struggles led by black women under the leadership of bank founder and president Maggie Lena Walker. This difference might be attributed to the fact that in Richmond black women were transgressing one of the major conventional provinces of gender. Walker, one of the wealthiest African Americans in the country, was not the only successful businesswoman in the city. Since before the turn of the twentieth century the idea of economic development by black women had caught on, producing various degrees of financial independence. A brief comparison with Richmond suggests that it was the continued submission to proscribed gender roles in Savannah that made it safe for men to support their women at the polls. See Barkley Brown, "Womanist Consciousness," 453–76.

37. For the Mrs. Pennybacker quote see "Suffrage Issue Strong in the South," *Woman's Journal*, September 14, 1912; for the Cheatham and Lamar quotes see A. Elizabeth Taylor, "Last Phase," 19.

38. A. Elizabeth Taylor, "Last Phase," 53.

39. *Savannah Tribune*, August 4, 1921, 5, and March 16, 1922, 3.

40. *Savannah Tribune*, March 16, 1922, 3.

41. "Biennial Address of Mrs. Rebecca Stiles Taylor," *Southeastern Herald*, September 1927, reel 24, frame 215, papers of the Federation of Colored Women's Clubs on microfilm.

42. *Savannah Morning News*, May 11, 1921, 14.

43. *Savannah Tribune*, May 21, 1921, 1.

44. *Savannah Morning News*, May 3, 1921, and May 10, 1921, 16.

45. *Savannah Morning News*, May 25, 1921; *Savannah Tribune*, March 6, 1920; *Savannah Morning News*, May 6, 1921, and May 16, 1921; *Savannah Tribune*, May 21, 1921, 1.

46. *Savannah Morning News*, December 1, 2, 5, 14, and 30, 1922.

47. *Savannah Tribune*, January 11, 1923; *Savannah Morning News,* January 8, 1923.

48. *Savannah Morning News*, January 8, 1923; *Savannah Tribune*, January 11, 1923.

49. *Savannah Morning News*, January 8, 1923, and December 7, 11, 12, and 14, 1922; W. D. Ulmer remembrance, in Fuller, "Happiness and Hard Times," 94–96; Jackson, *Ku Klux Klan*, 237, 246–47.

50. *Savannah Tribune*, June 21, 1923; Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, "'Mind That Burns,'" 331; Dollard quote in McMillen, *Dark Journey*, 238.

51. *Savannah Tribune*, May 19, 1927, 4, and January 16, 1928, 1; "Southeastern Federation's Program for 1925–1926," *Southeastern Herald*, February 1926; "Bienninal Address of Mrs. Rebecca Stiles Taylor," *National Notes*, September 1927.

52. Carby, "'On the Threshold,'" 301.

Four. "Have Hardly Had Straw"

1. Scattered anecdotal evidence suggests the prevalence of covert schools, conducted in clear transgression of state laws. In Savannah, Susie King Taylor, a former slave, set up a private school in her home on S. Broad Street before the war and continued teaching until the American Missionary Association put her out of business. Susie King Taylor, *Reminiscences of My Life*, 123–24, 127. There were others with more auspicious beginnings; members of Savannah's small antebellum free black population, for example, conducted private literacy campaigns. Most notable was Jane Deveaux, whose assets included property in slaves, James Simms, and James Porter. Simms had the dubious distinction of being the only teacher who was publicly whipped for operating a school. Refusing to pay his fine, Simms escaped to Boston, where he remained until the end of the war. Porter, the senior warden at Saint Stephen's Episcopal Church, earned his living as a tailor by day and outfitted his living quarters/schoolhouse with a trap door through which to escape in the event of a police raid, which he used for that purpose on at least one occasion. Whittington B. Johnson, *Black Savannah*, 128, 161; Jacqueline Jones, *Labor of Love*, 73; Cornelius, *"When I Can Read My Title Clear,"*

32; W. E. B. Du Bois, *Negro Common School*, 67; Mathews, "Black Newspapermen," 356–81.

2. James D. Anderson, *Education of Blacks*, 6–7, 11; Jacqueline Jones, *Labor of Love*, 73.

3. Rev. S. W. Magill, a white Georgian who had resided in Connecticut during the war, arrived in Savannah as the head of the AMA. Magill believed that the black teachers in Savannah were incompetent and their school system "radically defective." Foner, *Reconstruction,* 99; Jacqueline Jones, *Labor of Love*, 16, 73–75; Jean Fagan Yellin tells the story of the education of freedmen and women in Savannah after the war from the perspective of Harriet and Laura Jacobs in *Harriet Jacobs, a Life*, chapter 12.

4. See McPherson, "White Liberals and Black Power," and *Abolitionist Legacy*, 161, 186–88, 193.

5. McPherson, *Abolitionist Legacy*, 273–74; Richardson, "Failure of the American Missionary Association," 51–73.

6. *The Crisis*, February 1921, 160–61; Brundage, *Lynching in the New South*, 270–74.

7. The industrial education movement in the United States reached its zenith in the decade before World War I, and its successful efforts can be measured with the passage of the Smith-Lever Act in 1914 and the Smith-Hughes Act in 1917, providing federal aid for agriculture, vocational, and home economics courses. McPherson, *Abolitionist Legacy*, 210–12; Anderson and Moss, *Dangerous Donations*, 91; August Meier, "Beginning of Industrial Education," 21–44.

8. McPherson, *Abolitionist Legacy*, 217–18; Meier, "Beginning of Industrial Education"; Lewis, *W. E. B. Du Bois*, 175.

9. McPherson, *Abolitionist Legacy*, 224.

10. James M. Washington, *Frustrated Fellowship*, 159–70; Ammerman, *Baptist Battles*, 30–32; see also Booker T. Washington, *Negro in Business*, chapter 18.

11. Rev. W. G. Johnson, *The Georgia Baptist*, June 2, 1898.

12. McPherson, *Abolitionist Legacy*, 262; James M. Washington, *Frustrated Fellowship*, 131; Davis, *Clashing of the Soul*, 130–31. The struggle between black southerners and the ABHMS also appeared in other southern states. See Reavis, "Black Higher Education," 357–74; Mathews, "Black Newspapermen," 357.

13. McPherson, *Abolitionist Legacy*, 289–90. At the same time that Morgan rejected the separatists' demands, the ABHMS began grooming John Hope to become the first black president of Atlanta Baptist College.

14. *The Georgia Baptist*, March 10, 1898.

15. McPherson, "White Liberals and Black Power," 1372–73; McPherson, *Abolitionist Legacy*, 268; Davis, *Clashing of the Soul*, 131; Anderson and Moss, *Education of Blacks*, 15.

16. See Essien-Udom, *Black Nationalism*.

17. Brotz, *Negro Social and Political Thought,* introduction; Rafael, "White Love," 185; Moses, *Wings of Ethiopia,* 97, 99. In an essay on E. Franklin Frazier (chapter 7), Moses makes a distinction between separatism and nationalism. Separatism occurs

"at the level of social intercourse and family life," but a separatist is "integrationist when it comes to education, employment and housing." All nationalists were cultural assimilationists, 117–18.

18. McPherson, *Abolitionist Legacy*, 284; McPherson did not subscribe to a binary vision. Washington did, however, explaining that White's political position was a function of skin color, 183.

19. Reed, *W. E. B. Du Bois,* 7–8; for a related argument about the impoverishment of understanding "race relations" as a separate category from the study of history see Fields, "Origins of the New South"; Lewis, *W. E. B. Du Bois*, phrase, 326; *The Georgia Baptist*, October 6, 1898, March 24, 1898. Georgia minister C. T. Walker, who was widely known for his electrifying sermons, attended the Equal Rights Convention that White organized with his good friend and intellectual comrade, W. E. B. Du Bois, in Macon (detailed in chapter 3), but at Washington's request, in order to "minimize radical influence." Meier, *Negro Thought*, 222.

20. *The Georgia Baptist*, September 7, 1899.

21. *The Georgia Baptist*, February 23, 1899; Egemonye, "First African Baptist Church," 195.

22. *The Georgia Baptist*, September 29, 1898.

23. Stein, *World of Marcus Garvey,* 5; Anderson and Moss, *Dangerous Donations*, 16; McPherson, *Abolitionist Legacy,* 273.

24. Central City College, catalogue, 1900–1901, 5.

25. Davis, *Clashing of the Soul*, 130–31, 133; Torrence, *Story of John Hope*, 122, 131, 137–38.

26. Davis, *Clashing of the Soul*, 131. The correspondence between Sale and Holmes, which took place on September 23, 1899, was printed in *The Georgia Baptist*, October 5, 1899, 1.

27. Central City College, catalogue, 4.

28. Gilmore, *Gender and Jim Crow,* 37; Central City College, catalogue, 4, 8–9, 10–18; *The Georgia Baptist*, February 10, 1931, 5.

29. C. S. Wilkins, D.D., financial agent and vice president of Central City College, to Rev. Wallace Buttrick, D.D., in New York City, September 14, 1910. General Education Board (GEB); Central City College, catalogue. According to the 1901 catalogue, out of 310 students who attended the school, 228 were enrolled in the grammar school course and 54 were in the "academic course," or high school. The 27 men who were in training for the ministry matriculated in the "academic course," not at the college level; Torrence, *Story of John Hope*, 137.

30. *The Georgia Baptist*, February 10, 1931, 5; June 10, 1931, 5; Higgenbotham, *Righteous Discontent*, 35–38.

31. Higgenbotham, *Righteous Discontent*, 207.

32. Central City College, catalogue, 5, 7.

33. *The Georgia Baptist*, February 10, 1931, 5.

34. GMBC, minutes, Box 1), November 14–17, 1922, Levi and Jewell Terrell Collection; Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, vol. 1, chapter 12; Kerber, *Women of the Republic*, 11, 199–200.

35. GMBC, minutes, November 14–17, 1922, 76.

36. D. D. Crawford, "Women Are Always at Their Worse When Unrestrained by Masculine Sentiment," *The Georgia Baptist*, April 25, 1927, 3; GMBC, minutes, November 14–17, 1922.

37. The terms "matrifocal" and "matrilineal" ought not be confused. "Matrifocal" is a sociological term to describe the basic building block of all societies, not only Western societies, as the unit of mother and children. Matrilinearity, common in Africa, is simply a way of tracing descent or inheritance through the female line from the mother's brother's to sister's son, not from mother to daughter in an analogue to patrilinearity. The African historian Claire Robertson writes that it is difficult, if not impossible, to discover the extent to which the matrix of matrifocal kinship order extended from Africa and into American slave societies. One might correctly claim that matrifocality predominated in many African societies, especially in those that were organized polygamously. However, polygamy was (and is) class related and associated with wealth and therefore with the kinds of people who were less likely to fall prey to the slave trade. Aside from the historical inaccuracies that result from romanticizing the history of Africa, the rapacious economic demands of capitalist society were much more powerful than specific African matrifocal influences and would have outweighed any residual "Africanisms" that managed to survive the ordeals of the slave trade and New World slavery. See Robertson, "Africa into the Americas?" 10–11.

Cheryl Townsend Gilkes argues that the "history of black people *as Africans* is as relevant as their history in the United States for interpreting the black experience." "Roles of Church and Community Mothers," 368.

Savannah Tribune, November 3, 1927, 3. For representations of black woman in popular and academic discourse as immoral, promiscuous, and unclean during the age of Jim Crow see Beverly Guy-Sheftall, *Daughters of Sorrow*, 40–43; *Savannah Tribune*, November 3, 1927, 3; interview with Emory S. Campbell, director, Penn Center on Saint Helena's Island, SC, for the Mother of the Church.

38. *The Georgia Baptist*, November 10, 1930, 6; Moses makes the connection between the ideologies of Black Nationalists of the nineteenth century and European racial theory that promoted the idea of degrees of civilization. Moses, *Golden Age*, 25. Johann Gottfried von Herder wrote, "Human existence appears in every shape and kind, from the most sickly deformity, that can scarcely support life, to the superhuman form of a Grecian demi-god; from the passionate ardour of the Negro brain, to the capacity for consummate wisdom. Through faults and errors, through education, necessity, and exercise, every mortal seeks the symmetry of his powers." "Reflections on the Philosophy," quote on 53–54.

39. *The Georgia Baptist*, November 10, 1930, 6; Moses uses the expression "Anglo-African chauvinism" in his analysis of Booker T. Washington's "Atlanta Exposition Speech." *Golden Age*, 97–98.

40. GMBC, minutes, Box 1, November 15–18, 1921, 79; Raboteau, *Fire in the Bones*, 42–43; Raboteau, "Black Experience in American Evangelicalism"; Wilmore, *Black Religion and Black Radicalism*, 121; Moses, *Golden Age*, 24.

41. Woodward, *Origins of the New South*, 396–402.

42. See James D. Anderson, *Education of Blacks*, and Harlan, *Separate and Unequal*, for arguments that Ogden and the northern philanthropic movement more generally was committed to white supremacy; Woodward, *Origins of the New South*, 396–402, quote on 397; Anderson and Moss, *Dangerous Donations*, 41–42.

43. Woodward, *Origins of the New South*, 402; Torrence, *Story of John Hope*, 157.

44. W. E. B. Du Bois, *Quest of the Silver Fleece*, 160–62; See also James D. Anderson, *Education of Blacks,* and Harlan, *Separate and Unequal*, leading exponents of the conspiracy position after Du Bois.

45. Anderson and Moss, *Dangerous Donations*, 62, 71–72, 85.

46. Hahn, "Class and State in Postemancipation Societies," 86; Anderson and Moss, *Dangerous Donations*, 5, 62, 89–90; Woodward, *Origins of the New South*, 402; Wolters, *New Negro on Campus,* 8. The secular foundations that worked with the GEB and SEB, organized after the turn of the twentieth century, were the Slater, Jeanes, Phelps-Stokes, and Rosenwald Foundations. Anderson and Moss show that by 1915 businessmen were no longer in charge of the GEB. William H. Baldwin Jr. was a member of the SEB and president of the GEB. George F. Peabody was treasurer of both. J. L. M. Curry was a member of both as well as an agent of the Peabody and Slater funds, while Ogden was president of the SEB and the Southern Conference, a member of the GEB, and a member of the Hampton and Tuskegee boards of trustees, as were several other members of the GEB.

47. W. E. B. Du Bois, "Negro Education," *The Crisis* 15 (February 1918): 173–78, quote on 176.

48. For the GEB's position on the relationship between public school systems and private schools for black southerners and "the trip safely to Local Taxation," see "Memorandum for Mr. Baldwin," Hancock County, GA, 1902 GEB, M. L. Duggan to Wallace Buttrick, September 15, 1902, GEB papers. For the role of the SEB see Woodward, *Origins of the New South*, 404.

49. Thomas Jesse Jones, *Negro Education*, 1:60; see Lewis, *W. E. B. Du Bois*, 546–49; James D. Anderson, *Education of Blacks*, 250–51, 257; Anderson and Moss, *Dangerous Donations*, 45; W. E. B. Du Bois, "Negro Education," 173; McPherson, *Abolitionist Legacy*, 210–12.

50. Anderson and Moss, *Dangerous Donations*, 207; Kleibard, "'That Evil Genius,'" 5–20; Thomas Jesse Jones, *Negro Education*, 1:51, 35.

51. Kleibard, "'That Evil Genius,'" quote on 15; Anderson and Moss, *Dangerous Donations*, 202–3. Jones's dissertation, "The Sociology of a New York City Block," was an ethnographic study of the conflict between Jewish and Italian immigrants on a block near East 110th Street, in East Harlem.

52. Lewis, *W. E. B. Du Bois*, 547; Thomas Jesse Jones, *Negro Education*, 1:58, 60; Anderson and Moss, *Dangerous Donations*, 211.

53. Thomas Jesse Jones, *Negro Education*, 1:347; C. S. Wilkins, D.D., to Wallace Buttrick, D.D., December 14, 1910; William E. Holmes to Buttrick, March 25, 1911; Booker T. Washington to Holmes, August 15, 1912; Holmes to Buttrick, June 25,

1912, September 10, 1912, and March 25, 1911; Holmes to Robert Ogden, March 31, 1911, GEB papers.

54. GMBC, minutes, 1921, 43–44, 60, 78–79; Wm. E. Holmes to E. C. Sage, August 24, 1921, and report, December 12, 1921, GEB papers; Anderson and Moss, *Dangerous Donations*, 93; Range, *Rise and Progress*, 233.

55. Report, December 12, 1921, GEB papers; Range, *Rise and Progress*, 233.

56. Thomas Jesse Jones, *Negro Education*, 2:211; GMBC, *Journal*, 1925, 54; Gadson to Jackson Davis, September 13, 1926; Gadson to Davis, March 25, 1927; memo, Davis to W. W. Brierely, April 2, 1927, GEB papers.

57. Gadson to Jackson Davis, April 1, 1927. GEB papers.

58. Report of interview with Gadson, filed January 12, 1929, GEB papers; letter dated December 18, 1928, *The Georgia Baptist*, published January 10, 1929, 1.

59. GMBC *Journal*, 62; Klein, *Survey of Negro Colleges*, 272, 296–97; Range, *Rise and Progress*, 233; *The Georgia Baptist*, December 10, 1928.

60. Gadson to Jackson Davis, July 31, 1931, GEB papers.

61. *The Georgia Baptist,* December 10, 1928, 7, March 21, 1918, 1, June 25, 1929; Gadson to Jackson Davis, July 31, 1931, GEB papers; Range, *Rise and Progress*, 133; for conflicts in Savannah's FAB that ultimately cost E. G. Thomas his job, see chapter 5.

62. Gadson to Davis July 31, 1931, GEB papers.

63. Jackson Davis to Gadson, September 11, 1931, GEB papers; Anderson and Moss, *Dangerous Donations*, 9.

64. See chapter 2 for the distinction that black middle-class religious leaders made between trained ministers and untrained preachers who, in their view, impeded racial progress; Arthur Lewis to Walter B. Hill, field secretary, GEB, Richmond, VA, August 3, 1935; Hill to Lewis, August 7, 1935, GEB papers.

Five. "Peace and Harmony of the Church"

1. See Morris, *Origins of the Civil Rights Movement*. The historiography on black churches begins in 1903 with W. E. B. Du Bois, *Negro Church*, and includes Frazier, *Negro Church in America*, Lincoln and Mamiya, *Black Church*, and Joseph R. Washington, *Black Religion.*

2. James M. Washington, *Conversations with God*, introduction; McBeth, *Baptist Heritage*, 780–82.

3. Brackney, *Baptists*, 39–50; Second Baptist Church (hereafter referred to as SB), minutes, board of deacons meeting, November 2, 1930; SB, conference minutes, November 3, 1930, October 6, 1930.

4. For a discussion of black churches in Philadelphia during this period see Gregg, *Sparks from the Anvil*; SB, deacons' meetings, December 18, 1922, March 6, 1924, and July 14, 1924; FAB, minutes, board of deacons meetings, September 19, 1918, and December 12, 1920.

5. *Savannah Tribune*, November 12, 1925, 1.

6. *Savannah Tribune*, December 15, 1927, 1, September 1, 1927, 1, December 12, 1935, 4. See chapter 2 for a discussion of the way middle-class black Baptists regarded

black musical forms. Bourdieu, "The Aristocracy of Culture" in *Distinction*, 11–96. Jenkins, *Pierre Bourdieu*, chapter 2.

7. Discussions with Johnnie Mae Harris about her grandmother, Mrs. Lottie Ziegler, a member of Tremont Temple Baptist since the 1920s, fall 1994, Savannah, GA; *Savannah Tribune*, August 6, 1925, 3; SB, conference minutes, January 28, 1935.

8. *Savannah Tribune*, August 9, 1923, 3, August 23, 1923, 1, December 6, 1928, 3, and October 6, 1932, 3.

9. In 1927 First African's Cradle Roll Department organized a "midget wedding" in which children performed the roles of the traditional wedding party. *Savannah Tribune*, August 18, 1927, 3. J. W. Williamson describes a womanless wedding in West Texas in the 1950s, a shotgun affair between two (white) clans, "hillbillies of classic cartoon guise." One member of the wedding party arrived dressed as a "giant girl baby in a wheelbarrow," and the bride, "played by the biggest, most macho tub-belly in Silverton, was visibly extravagantly pregnant." For comedic purposes, the groom was played by one of the smallest men in town. The "bride's pappy," dragged him to the altar while "toting a rifle and swigging from a moonshine jug." The audience—ordinary, mainstream, and middle class—was terrified of their "hillbilly," country bumpkin roots and never would have laughed at such things in their daily lives. In their world, writes Williamson, when pregnancy occurred outside of marriage, "it was too shameful to speak of in the open." They made fun of the things that made them vulnerable. Audiences howled with laughter when the "actors" dressed as women delivered partially scripted and heavily improvised ribald commentary. Part of the fun was watching the most important men in town playing buxom brides and bridesmaids, dim-witted grooms, and outrageous ministers. This unrestrained environment made it possible for them to release their fear. Williamson, *Hillbillyland*, 14–17; Daniel, *Lost Revolutions*, 158–60; e-mail from Daniel to author, May 11, 2005. "Some twenty years ago I attended a womanless wedding in my hometown of Spring Hope, N.C. It was a fundraiser for the Methodist church, and I went with my mother. It was corny but fun and some of the men got into the act more than others. The audience laughed [at] the entire performance. Much of the entertainment came from knowing the man cross-dressed and commenting on how successful he was." See also Woodside, "Womanless Wedding."

10. *Savannah Tribune*, April 23, 1936, 2; for John Delaware see *Savannah Tribune*, May 13, 1926, 1; for Dilworth see *Savannah Tribune*, January 17, 1920; for "hillbillyism" see note 9; Ida B. Wells, "A Red Record, in Wells, *Southern Horrors*; Hodes, *White Women, Black Men*, 79; See also Jacqueline Dowd Hall, " 'Mind That Burns.'"

11. See chapter 3 for black women voting in the early 1920s; Marjorie Garber, *Vested Interests*, 277–81; Eric Lott, introduction to *Love and Theft*.

12. See Sweet, "Churches as Moral Courts," 3–21.

13. Wood, " 'For Their Satisfaction or Redress' "; SB, minutes, board of deacons meetings, 1922–32; for the story of Bishop C. M. Grace in Savannah see chapter 2.

14. FAB, minutes, board of deacons meeting, August 12, 1918, and October 11, 1920.

15. SB, minutes, conference meeting, July 2, 1928; SB, letter from Deacons J. H. Raines, Wm. Hicks, and Geo. Wilkins, June 17, 1928; SB, minutes, conference meeting, October 7, 1929; SB, minutes, board of deacons, October 28, 1929; SB, minutes, church conference, minutes, November 4, 1929.

16. For church covenant see Brackney, *Baptists*, 44–49; Turner, "Anthropology of Performance," 72–98; author's conversation with Dr. Emory S. Campbell, director, Penn Center in South Carolina, about his memories of "praying in the wilderness" as a child in Hilton Head, SC, July 7, 1993.

17. For the story of Bishop C. M. Grace in Savannah see chapter 2.

18. The term "paedo-baptist" dates back to nineteenth-century England when Baptists broke fellowship with other evangelicals who carried on the tradition of infant baptism, which the Baptists regarded as "vain and superstitious." In the early twentieth century black Baptists invoked it as a general way to refer to individuals who were not "orthodox." Other spellings of the same term included "pedo-Baptist." Brackney, *Baptists*, xix. See also SB, minutes, board of deacons meetings and the general conference meetings, 1920s; FAB, minutes, board of deacons meetings, 1918–35; SB, minutes, board of deacons meeting, May 27, 1929; FAB, minutes, board of deacons meetings, June 14 and December 13, 1926.

19. FAB, minutes, board of deacons meeting, June 14, 1926.

20. Interview with John Q. Adams, May 18, 1994, Savannah, GA; Mount Zion, minutes, conference meetings, 1909–15, in possession of Deacon Johnny P. Jones, Savannah, GA.

21. SB, minutes, board of deacons meetings, minutes, October 23, 1922, and April 4, 1925; minutes, conference meeting, June 8, 1925; minutes, board of deacons meetings, May 25 and July 27, 1931.

22. FAB, minutes, conference meeting, April 11, 1927; FAB, minutes, board of deacons meetings, May 12, 1924, and January 11, 1926.

23. FAB, minutes, conference meeting, September 19, 1918; Connors Temple Baptist Church, minutes, conference meeting, 1934, in possession of Deacon Washington Hart, Savannah, GA.

24. SB, minutes, general conference meeting, November 8 and December 3, 1934. Includes police report signed by Officer McGrath, arresting officer.

25. Pastor's Record on Sermons, E. O. S. Cleveland, in possession of Saint John Baptist Church, Savannah, GA, May 14, 1940.

26. See Turner, "Anthropology of Performance," esp. 72–98.

27. The phrase "war of maneuver/war of position" comes from the Italian theorist Antonio Gramsci. It refers to the ideological struggles intellectuals fought to advance knowledge and human freedom. Gramsci saw intellectuals and not social classes as pivotal to modern society. He famously wrote, "All men are intellectuals, one could therefore say: but not all men have in society the function of intellectuals."

The distinction between intellectual and non-intellectual is determined only by professional category. See Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks,* 9, 108–10. For the Jezebel stereotype of black women see Victoria E. Bynum, *Unruly Women,* 9, and during slavery, Deborah Grey White, *Ain't I a Woman?* 27–46.

28. McClintock, *Imperial Leather*, 85–89.

29. Hunter, *To 'Joy My Freedom*, 55.

30. Durr, *Outside the Magic Circle,* 14–17.

31. McClintock, *Imperial Leather*, 89.

32. Washington-Williams and Stadiem, *Dear Senator,* quotes on 41, 59.

33. Washington-Williams and Stadiem, *Dear Senator*, 119–20.

34. Stallybrass and White, *Politics and Poetics of Transgression*, 4–5, chapter 5.

35. Washington-Williams and Stadiem, *Dear Senator*, 135 (emphasis in original).

36. For a discussion of prayer houses see chapter 1. FAB, minutes, board of deacons meeting, May 14, 1923.

37. For a discussion of sexual violence against black women see Barkley Brown, "Negotiating and Transforming the Public Sphere: African American Political Life in the Transition from Slavery to Freedom."

38. For the story of black women voting in Savannah in the early 1920s, see chapter 3. For Negro Health Week see Proceedings of the Twenty-second Annual Meeting of the National Negro Business League, Atlanta, GA, August 17–19, 1921, 34–35.

39. Turner, "Anthropology of Performance," 78–79.

40. FAB, minutes, board of deacons meetings, August 9, 1920, and July 10, 1922; *Savannah Tribune*, December 22, 1922, 1. Thomas, *First African Baptist Church,* 120–21. Although Thomas was eventually himself ousted from the church, he wrote this church history before his tenure at the church ended.

41. *Savannah Tribune*, December 22, 1922, 1; FAB, minutes, board of deacons meeting, May 14, 1923; Thomas, *First African Baptist Church*, 120–21, 126–27.

42. *Savannah Tribune*, January 11, 1923, 1.

43. *Savannah Tribune*, November 2, 1922, 3, November 8, 1923, 1.

44. *Savannah Tribune*, November 8, 1923, 3; Thomas, *First African Baptist Church*, 127; FAB, minutes, board of deacons meeting, August 11, 1924; *Savannah Tribune*, November 15, 1923, 6.

45. Delaware was a postal carrier for most of his life, one of the best jobs available to black men at the time, and Burson was also a U.S. government employee. *Savannah Tribune*, June 29, 1933, 4, January 26, 1939, 1; interview with John Q. Adams, May 18, 1994, Savannah, GA.

46. *Savannah Tribune*, December 20, 1923, 4, December 27, 1923, 1, and March 19, 1925, 5.

47. FAB, minutes, board of deacons meeting, September 2, 1924; Thomas's petition, *Thomas v. Marks*, Chatham County, Georgia Superior Court, 1928 (February 17, 1928, March 30, 1928); FAB, minutes, board of deacons meetings, April 12 and June 14, 1926, July 12, 1927, December 13, 1926; "Declaration" signed by Deacons Chas. H.

Stewart and F. S. Belcher, November 20, 1927, Folder 8 Correspondence (1920–1933), FAB, *Savannah Tribune*, April 26, 1928, 1.

48. Turner, "Liminality and the Performative Genres"; *Savannah Tribune*, February 23, 1928, 4; *Thomas v. Marks*, 1928.

49. *Savannah Tribune*, 31 May 1928, 1, July 12, 1928, 1.

50. FAB, minutes, board of deacons meeting, March 11, 1929. According to the church constitution, a "letter of dismission" was granted to any member seeking "to join another church of the same faith and order," provided the member was not "under censure of the church and is in fellowship with all of the members." See *Constitution and Rules of Order of the First African Baptist Church*, 8; FAB, minutes, board of deacons meetings, October 14, 1929, and February 26, 1930.

51. *Savannah Tribune*, April 9, 1931, 1; FAB, minutes, board of deacons meetings, October 14, 1929, December 14, 1931, October 13, 1930; *Savannah Tribune*, September 4, 1930, 1; Records of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, Branch Files, Savannah, GA (hereafter cited as NAACP Branch Files), Group I, January–December 1930; "News Item," signed W. W. Hill, February 27, 1934.

52. For Central City College see chapter 4; FAB, minutes, board of deacons meeting, December 14, 1931; *Savannah Tribune*, January 20, 1938, 1, January 26, 1939, 1.

53. FAB, minutes, board of deacons meetings, February 26 and October 13, 1930. SB, minutes, board of deacons meeting, December 3, 1934; minutes, conference meetings, 1936–42; minutes, board of deacons meeting, May 25, 1931; minutes, conference meeting, January 9, 1928. Interview with Rev. Matthew Southhall Brown, pastor of Saint John Baptist Church, August 8, 1994, Savannah, GA; interview with Rev. John Q. Adams, June 16, 1994, Savannah, GA.

54. *Savannah Tribune*, October 1, 1931, 1, September 21, 1939, 5; WPA, *Drums and Shadows,* 46–51.

55. First Tabernacle Baptist reported losing 387 members, Mount Zion lost 112, Central Baptist lost 405, Bethlehem lost 527, Happy Home lost 300, Friendship Baptist lost 130, and Saint Luke lost 200. Berean Baptist Association, minutes, July 21–24, 1927, Thunderbolt, GA, 61; SB, minutes, board of deacons meetings, March 9 and August 25, 1930; SB, minutes, general conference meeting, August 3, 1936; *Savannah Tribune*, November 18, 1937, 1.

56. SB, minutes, general conference meeting, August 4, 1930.

57. SB, minutes, general conference meeting, July 7, 1930, December 4, 1939, and April 5, 1942.

58. *Savannah Tribune*, January 29, 1925, 1.

59. *Savannah Tribune*, May 6, 1926, 6.

60. *Savannah Tribune*, January 25, 1934, 6, January 10, 1935, 1.

61. *Savannah Tribune*, July 4, 1935, 1.

62. *Savannah Tribune*, April 5, 1934, 1, October 1, 1935, 1.

63. *Savannah Tribune*, May 25, 1933, 1.

Epilogue

1. *Savannah Tribune*, December 12, 1935, 1, and December 19, 1935, 1.

2. *Savannah Tribune*, December 26, 1935, 1.

3. *Savannah Tribune*, March 8, 1928, 1, and March 15, 1928, 1; *The Crisis*, February 1923, 213–15.

4. The population of black people in Savannah in 1920 was 39,179, and the number of black Baptist churches listed in the City Directory was 53. Twenty years later, the black population had grown to 43,237, and the number of churches listed in the 1940 City Directory was 68. In 1920 there was one Baptist church for every 739 black persons; in 1940 there was one for every 636. U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Abstract of the Fourteenth Census of the United States, 1920*, table 34, p. 114; *Sixteenth Census of the United States*, 1940.

5. According to a study issued in 1912, of the 604 decisions handed down by the Supreme Court between 1868 and 1911 involving the Fourteenth Amendment, only 28 dealt with the protection of civil rights for African Americans. Of these, only 6 upheld the basic principle outlined in the amendment. See McAdam, *Political Process*, 71.

6. Fligstein, *Going North.*

7. McAdam, *Political Process*, 77.

8. Harvard Sitkoff, *A New Deal for Blacks: The Emergence of Civil Rights as a National Issue,* 85–86; Chappell, *Stone of Hope*, chapters 1–2.

9. The first time was, of course, during Reconstruction. McAdam, *Political Process*, 81–83.

10. Lawson, *Running for Freedom*, 9, 33, 40–41. FDR issued Executive Order 8802 after he tried to get Randolph to halt the march. The order left the policy of discrimination in the armed forces unchanged. Truman's Presidential Committee on Civil Rights endorsed removing the poll tax, the literacy test, and other discriminatory obstacles to voting. It also recommended establishing a Civil Rights Division in the Justice Department, which became crucial to the enforcement of civil rights laws during the 1960s.

11. *Savannah Tribune*, July 1, 1937, 4, and January 5, 1939, 1.

12. *Savannah Tribune*, September 4, 1930, 1, and August 3, 1933, 1.

13. *Savannah Tribune*, May 5, 1932, 1, July 1, 1937, 4, and January 5, 1939, 1; *The Crisis* 25, no. 4 (February 1923): 213–15.

14. *Savannah Tribune*, September 4, 1930, 1, May 25, 1933, 1; and January 11, 1934, 1.

15. NAACP Branch Files, 1934–35.

16. *Savannah Tribune*, September 8, 1932, 1, and June 29, 1933, 4; Tuck, "City Too Dignified to Hate."

17. *Savannah Tribune*, January 11, 1934, 1.

18. *Savannah Tribune*, October 13, 1932, 1.

19. Tuck, *Beyond Atlanta,* 44–48, quotes on 47.

20. Tuck, *Beyond Atlanta*, 47–48; FAB, Correspondence, Outside and Church

Organizations, Box 6, Folder 1; NAACP, minutes, State NAACP Conference of Georgia, Albany, GA, November 12–13, 1943; NAACP, minutes, Fourth Annual Session of the State NAACP Conference of Georgia, November 16–17, 1945; Grant, *Way It Was*, 363.

21. Lawson, *Running for Freedom,* 14–16.
22. Tuck, *Beyond Atlanta*, 41, 47, quote on 47.
23. Gilbert, "Memoir."
24. Tuck, *Beyond Atlanta*, 109, 127–28.

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Mrs. Naomi Hills and Mrs. Thelma Miles, April 26, 1994
Mrs. Josephine Hodge, April 27, 1994
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